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[illegible] and Their

GAVIN MAXWELL *Voyager from Scotland*

AXEL MUNTHE *Apostle of Pity*

WILLIAM J. LEDERER AND EUGENE BURDICK *Indignant Americans*

MARY STEWART *Storyteller Extraordinary*

IRVING STONE *Portraying the Great*

GAVIN MAXWELL'S London home, an attractive house in a secluded Chelsea square, is full of rugs: rugs draped over the furniture, on the walls, on the floor—woven and sheepskin, from Sicily, Iraq and Morocco—all evidence of his travels abroad.

Among them, in a glass cage, lives a Saharan sand lizard. A foot long, squat and scaly, it has beady eyes that followed me as I crossed the room to meet Maxwell. He told me that he had rescued it from an Arab "witch doctor" in Morocco, expecting that it might live for three weeks. A year later it was still very much alive!

Scots

I wondered if Edal, the otter whose miraculous appearance in the author's life is described in *Ring of Bright Water,* kept the lizard company, but I was to be disappointed. "It isn't really fair to bring an otter to London," Maxwell explained.

Maxwell went on to tell me of Teko, another otter of the same species as Edal, to whom he had given a home in the hope that he would be a companion; unfortunately Edal took an immediate dislike to Teko, so they now live separately. Two Scottish otters, Mossy and Monday, make up a quartet. Maxwell hopes that this pair will breed, particularly as it is more than a hundred years since otters have bred in captivity. "With four otters, life is rather complicated at Camusfeàrna," their owner admits, "but they are such wonderfully entertaining companions."

I asked Maxwell whether the publicity following the tremendous success of *Ring of Bright Water* had bothered him. At first, he said, it had been very trying. People would appear at Camusfeàrna without warning and ask to be put up for the night, each thinking he was the only one to have worked out its exact position. Late one evening, Maxwell was wearily starting to cook supper when a knock at the door announced the arrival of an American, who had come "three thousand miles especially to see Mr. Maxwell". The visitor's reception was chilly; Maxwell values his privacy.

He continues to be astonished at the book's success. It was written rather quickly, as a change from his usual books about foreign lands, and it is a measure of his brilliant natural gift that already it has become a classic of its kind. In a way, the story began abroad. For it was at the end of a journey through the marshlands of Iraq that Wilfred Thesiger, the explorer, gave him Mijbil, the real hero of this book.

Although the author is now writing a sequel, he does not wish to be "typed" as a writer of animal books. "I would write about anything!"—anything, that is, that appeals deeply to him or stirs his imagination.



He enjoys travelling and exploring little-known places in search of fascinating and unusual subjects. He does not enjoy the actual writing, although he writes easily, and all his books reveal a flowing, often poetic style.

Maxwell did not always intend to be a writer:

"It was something that snowballed. After the last war, I bought the island of Soay, off Skye, and founded a shark-fishing industry. It failed and I came back to London to become a professional portrait painter. I love to paint"—and nowadays he often illustrates his books with deft, evocative drawings.

He regrets that his career as an artist did not earn him enough money to travel; its end led to his first book—*Harpoon at a Venture*—an account of the shark-fishing project, and suddenly he found himself a full-time writer.

During the next few years he spent much time in Sicily, collecting material for his book about the bandit Giuliano, a subject so explosive that the author was sentenced, *in absentia*, to nine months in prison and was banned from travelling in Italy for some time. But he had already completed his painstaking research on a second Sicilian subject: the appalling living conditions of the simple island people, of whom he wrote in *The Ten Pains of Death*.

He will spend weeks checking facts that may result in a sentence or a word, for he sets great store by the truth—and, obviously, by sincerity. He is at present making notes for a book about Morocco, a country that appeals to him so much that he is trying to buy a house there. He likes the Moors and feels that his sympathy for primitive peoples and his frankly anti-colonialist views have helped towards their acceptance of him, for they are normally suspicious of Europeans. His next journey, he hopes, will be to the Far East, which he has long wished to visit for, he says, "Things are closing in and there may not be much time".

Though fully occupied as a writer, Maxwell is still primarily interested in the human causes he feels strongly about. He is a sponsor of the Danilo Dolci Trust, founded to aid development among the destitute in Sicily. He is a fervent supporter of the campaign for the abolition of capital punishment in Britain. The preservation of the wildlife he knows and loves so well is naturally another cause of his and he is an honorary life member of the Wildfowl Trust, founded by Peter Scott. Before the war Maxwell had formed his own collection of wild geese at his family house in the south of Scotland and in 1948 he sold it to Peter Scott to form the nucleus of the Slimbridge Wildfowl Trust. Five descendants of these geese fly free at Camusfeàrna.

Whatever he may do and wherever he may travel, this gifted writer will always return to the beauty and peace of his Scottish home, to the otters playing within the ring of bright water. "Home is for me as yet a fortress from which to essay raid and foray, an embattled position behind whose walls one may retire to lick new wounds and plan fresh journeys to farther horizons." A.H.

Axel Munthe APOSTLE OF PITY

A MEMOIR BY HIS SON, MALCOLM MUNTHE

MY FATHER was the youngest son of an impoverished family of petty noblemen long established in Sweden. He suffered from a delicate chest and, instead of playing with other boys, would concern himself with an endless variety of sick animals, which he hid under his bed. He even tried to



hatch the eggs of a recalcitrant hen by patiently sitting on them. His other solace was music. On the old family estate near Stockholm, his father's cousin had earlier established and protected Jenny Lind, "the Swedish Nightingale". She used to return there from her tours round the capitals of Europe, and my father would spend long summer evenings listening to her sing and play.

As a youth, while studying to become a doctor, he developed consumption and was sent to die in the South of France. Instead he recovered and persuaded the doctor who had cured him to allow him to pursue his studies in the milder climate of France. He took his degree at Paris University in triumph at the age of twenty-two, the youngest doctor ever to qualify there. His amazing career had started, a career that was to take him from his first practice in Paris to the frozen wastes of Lappland; from cholera-stricken Naples to fashionable Rome; from his crowded clinics to the dream house that he built on the enchanted isle of Capri . . . "San Michele".

At his various homes and clinics he would house scores of sick and poor and mad and sad creatures—ranging from Billy the monkey to a demented crossing sweeper. The celebrated also came to him—the painter Sartorio, the dethroned Empress Eugenie of France, Gladstone, Kaiser Wilhelm, and a most unwanted guest, Goering, the Field-Marshal of Nazi Germany. He would turn none away as long as he thought they might benefit from his help.

In middle age, my father became blind, and while learning to live without seeing the beautiful things he loved, he wrote his autobiography—*The Story of San Michele*—one of the best-sellers of all time. Characteristically, he gave a large share of the royalties from this to establish bird sanctuaries in Capri and Sweden. When the Second World War came he had to leave his home. He returned to Sweden, to spend his last years in the Royal Palace with his friend King Gustaf.

In the winter of 1949, as snow-storms raged round the darkened

rooms of the vast old Palace, he died at the age of ninety-one. His years of service to animals and men on this earth had ended—but the story of San Michele goes on travelling from land to land throughout the civilized world.

William J. Lederer and Eugene Burdick INDIGNANT AMERICANS

The Ugly American, *from which a brief episode has been selected for this volume, is the best-selling novel that foreshadowed the formation of President Kennedy's Peace Corps. Mr. Lederer here tells how and why this important book came to be written.*

IN 1957 I was on the staff of the U.S. Commander-in-Chief, Pacific, as a specialist on Asian affairs, and Bud Burdick was wandering around the Pacific writing for a magazine. Bud and I had known each other for years, and when he passed through Honolulu we had a reunion. We began commiserating over the loss of American prestige in Asia, the reasons for it, and the fact that the public did not have the remotest idea of how America's foreign policy was being bungled.

We decided to write a book; and started that day by outlining sixty-two possible chapters. Bud returned to Berkeley, California, and I stayed at Pearl Harbour, he to write the even chapters and I the odd ones. We posted our efforts to each other as they were written, and during the nine months required to write the book, we saw each other only twice, over weekends.

We wrote the book as non-fiction. Six days before the manuscript had to be submitted we met again for polishing. At this point we realized that our story would be better told as fiction. We burnt all our manuscripts and notes. Then, with a battery of dictating machines and typists, we dictated the book in six days. The way it was transcribed from the machines to paper is approximately the way it was published.

WILLIAM J. LEDERER

Mary Stewart STORYTELLER EXTRAORDINARY

FOR A distinguished university lecturer to become a best-selling author seems a startling transition. I knew of dons who had written cynical stories of High Table politics, and of those who read nothing but Plato and wrote nothing but intricate detective stories. This was a different case, however. Mary Stewart's novels are about ordinary people enjoying colourful adventures.

The answer to the riddle was immediately obvious when I went to see her. Mary Stewart could not look, behave or talk less like the conventional "woman don". She is, like her novels, attractive, amusing and forthright in her views. She holds very definite opinions on the great writers of the past and on her own contemporaries, and for many years she lectured undergraduates on "The Novel". I suspect that her lectures were anything but dryly academic, for the point that she would emphasize was that a novel must tell a story.

"For some strange reason," she says, "people use the word 'storyteller' as if it were an insult. That's quite ridiculous. The ability to tell a story is the most vital quality of all."

Mary Stewart decided to practise what she had preached when she abandoned teaching for marriage to a fellow lecturer. Each of the seven novels she has had published since tells a story that is exciting and realistic, describes real people and is set against some vivid, exotic background.

These colourful backgrounds are souvenirs from her holidays. As she puts it, "I like to travel, particularly where there are ancient monuments such as Delphi or Hadrian's Wall, and I do not use a camera. When other people return from their holidays they can browse over snapshots. I have to use my memory, and I remember more if I put my memories into words. So I find myself writing another novel."

I asked her if she ever wanted to write about misfits, who feature so frequently in present-day literature. Her reply was characteristically vigorous: "Why should I? There are far too many people writing about them as it is, and too often there's a tendency to use the fashionable interest in the misfit as an excuse for sensationalism. I prefer to write about ordinary people. The people one meets every day are quite fascinating enough."

E.M.

Irving Stone PORTRAYING THE GREAT

"THE biographical novel," says Irving Stone, "is the true story of a human being, written in an art form. The research must be honest and far-reaching, but the result must also stand as a compelling novel." Irving Stone's first biographical novel was *Lust for Life,* the story of the painter Vincent Van Gogh. Twenty-seven years and fourteen best-sellers later, he again portrays the life of a great artist.

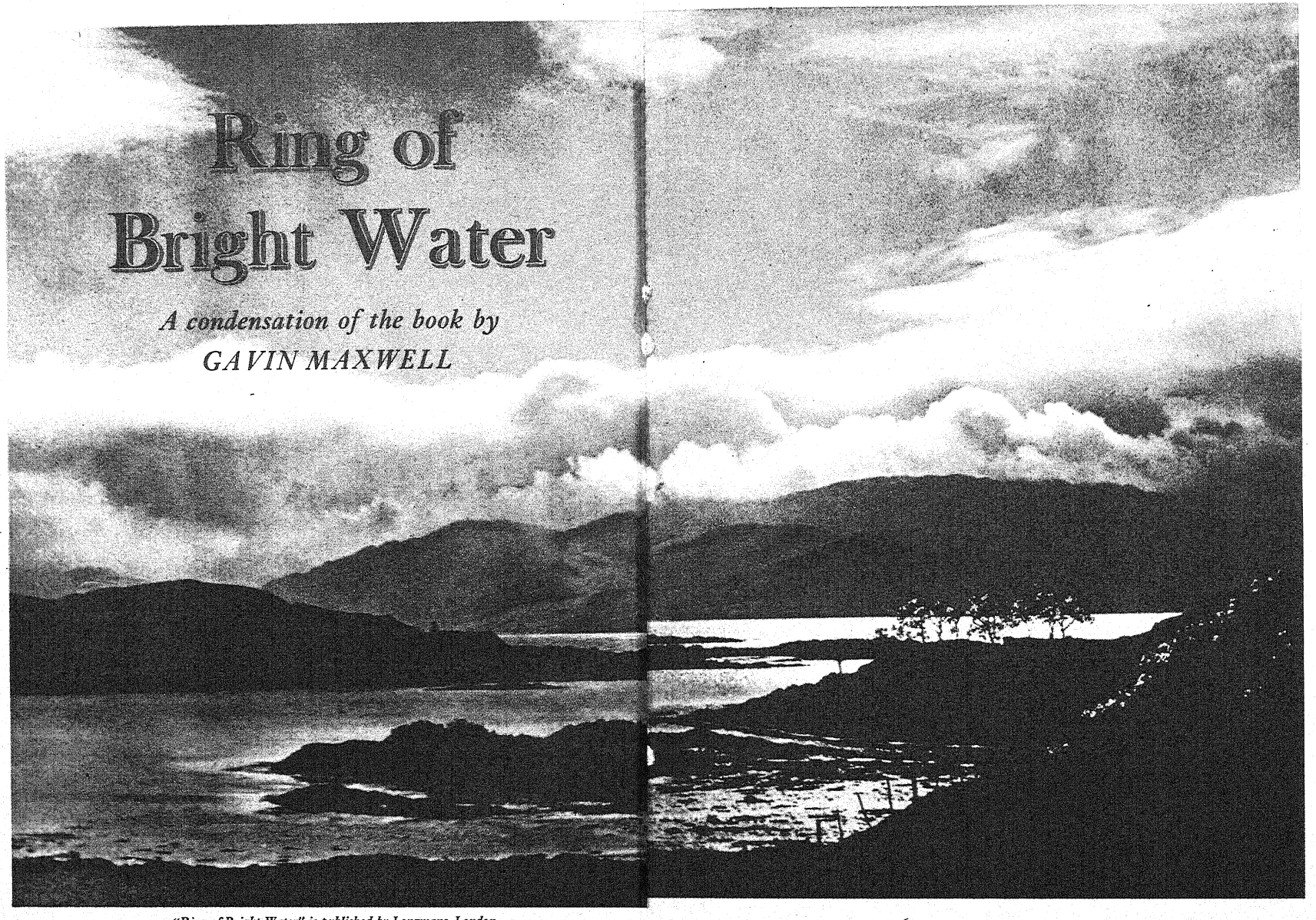
Asked what drew him to the tempestuous Florentine, Mr. Stone replied: "First, Michelangelo was both an artist and a truly universal man. His life can show people of every country and time what a true artist is—a man who can express an infinite world in his work. Second, few of the millions who recognize Michelangelo's name are aware of his dramatic, stormy life, or of the nearly-insufferable obstacles against which he had to struggle."

How does one go about the tremendous project of reconstructing the story of a man who lived more than four hundred years ago? "The work actually began," answers Mr. Stone, "in 1956. My wife and I sold our home and moved to Florence, where we set up a complete office, including research assistants to work in the Latin and Italian archives. The entire task took something over four years. The documents of Michelangelo's period have many references to him and his family, and almost half of *The Agony and The Ecstasy* consists of newly discovered material.

"We spent more than a year in and around Florence, another full year in Rome, then lived for months on end in Bologna, Siena, Venice—all of them cities where Michelangelo had lived, suffered and created his masterpieces. In Carrara, site of the world's most famous marble quarries, where Michelangelo worked as a youth, I had to learn the local dialect so that I could work beside the quarriers, learning something of the art of marble quarrying and carving at first hand. When we had finished, there were three filing cabinets of research and documents."

The final note on Mr. Stone's achievement is in the words of the great art critic, Bernard Berenson, who said:

"Irving Stone comes closer to capturing the true spirit of Michelangelo than any other writer." R.S.J.



Ring of Bright Water

A condensation of the book by

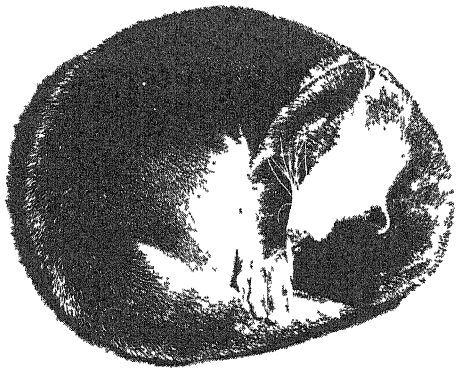
GAVIN MAXWELL

"Ring of Bright Water" is published by Longmans, London

ONE OF the most unusual friendships in recent times began when author-naturalist Gavin Maxwell adopted an impish otter named Mijbil as a pet. Maxwell soon discovered that Mij—full of mischief, intelligence and demanding affection—thought that *he* had adopted Maxwell. For you do not own an otter; he owns you.

In London, Mij went for walks on a lead, swam in the bath and chose his own squeaky toys at the near-by shop. But once on the white beaches of Camusfeàrna, the author's beautiful home on the west coast of Scotland, Mij ran free as he wished. He swam in the sea, fished for eels in the burn—and proved to be a joyful, loving companion. In this delightful book, which has broken records as a best-seller, Gavin Maxwell paints an unforgettable picture of the bond that understanding and respect can create between a man and an animal.

"An enchanting book."—*The Sunday Times*
"Magnificent." —*The Spectator*



I SIT in the pine-panelled living-room of Camusfeàrna, with an otter asleep upon its back among the cushions on the sofa, forepaws in the air, and with the expression of tightly shut concentration that very small babies wear in sleep. Beyond the door is the sea, no more than a stone's throw distant. A group of greylag geese sweep past the window and alight upon the small carpet of green turf; but for the soft, contented murmur of their voices and the sounds of the sea and the waterfall there is utter silence.

This place has been my home now for ten years, since first it was offered to me by a friend who owns the estate on which it stands. Wherever the changes of my life may lead me it will remain my spiritual home until I die, a house to which one returns, not with the certainty of welcoming human beings, nor with the expectation of comfort and ease, but to a long familiarity in which every lichen-covered rock and rowan tree shows known and reassuring faces.

It was early spring when I came to live here for the first time. The Highland road, single-tracked for the last forty miles, runs southward a mile or so inland of Camusfeàrna and some four hundred feet above it. At the point directly above the house there is a single cottage at the roadside, Druimfiaclach, the home of my nearest neighbours, the MacKinnons. Inland from Druimfiaclach the hills rise steeply to a dominating peak of more than three thousand feet. On the other side, to the westward, the mist-hung mountains of the Isle of Skye tower across a three-mile-wide sound. The descent to Camusfeàrna is so steep

that neither the house nor the little islands in the bay are visible from the road above, and this paradise within a paradise remains, to the casual road user, unguessed.

On that first visit I left my car close to Druimfiaclach and, because I was unfamiliar with the ill-defined footpath, I began to follow the course of the burn—the stream that part flows, part falls down the hill-side to Camusfeàrna. The grass was gay with thick-clustering primroses and violets, though snow still lay like lace over the lower hills of Skye. Birch branches were purple in the sun and the dark-banded stems were as white as the distant snows. The rucksack bounced and jingled on my shoulders, and in front of me trotted my dog, Jonnie, a huge black-and-white springer spaniel whose father and grandfather before him had been my constant companions. Now his plump white rump bounced and perked through the heather and bracken, as times without number at night I was in the future to follow its pale just-discernible beacon from Druimfiaclach to Camusfeàrna.

Presently the burn became narrower, and tilted sharply seaward between rock walls; and below me I could hear the roar of a high waterfall. I climbed out from the ravine and found myself on a bluff looking down upon the sea and upon Camusfeàrna.

Nowhere in all the West Highlands, where I had always wanted a foothold, had I seen any place of so varied a beauty in so small a compass. Immediately below me the steep hill-side fell to a broad green field, almost an island ringed with silver, for the burn flanked it at the right and then curved round seaward in a glittering horseshoe. The sea took up where the burn left off, and formed the whole frontage of the field, running up into a bay of rocks and sand. At the edge of this bay, the house of Camusfeàrna stood unfenced among grazing black-faced sheep. There were rabbits scampering on the turf round the house, and out over the dunes the bullet-heads of two seals were black in the tide.

Beyond the green field and the wide shingly outflow of the burn were the little islands, rough and rocky, with white beaches splashed among them. They formed a chain perhaps half a mile in length, and ended in one whose seaward shore showed the turret of a lighthouse.

Beyond was the shining enamelled sea, and beyond it again the rearing bulk of Skye.

At the foot of the hill the burn flowed calmly between an avenue of

alders. I crossed a wooden bridge, and a moment later I turned the key in Camusfeàrna door for the first time.

THERE WAS NOT one stick of furniture in the house, no water or lighting, and the air inside struck chill as a mortuary; but I had brought with me on my back the essentials of living for a day or two—a bedding-roll, a Primus stove, candles and some tinned food. I knew that something to sit upon would present no problems, for every west-facing beach in that part of the world is littered with fish boxes.

Ten years at Camusfeàrna have now taught me that if I wait long enough practically every imaginable household object will turn up on the long gravel beaches within a mile of the house. Big open fish baskets make firewood baskets and waste-paper baskets, wooden tubs make stools, and I have been amazed to find that almost the commonest of jetsam are rubber hot-water bottles. A surprising number are undamaged, and from the damaged ones one may cut highly functional table mats. At the beginning, however, there was no table to protect, and it soon seemed clear that I should have to import some essential furniture. This was not easy, for there was no road to the house, and I was fifteen miles by sea from the nearest village of any size. (Because of the long sea lochs that, like Norwegian fiords, cut deep into the west coast, that same village is one hundred and twenty miles by road.)

Finally I motored a hundred miles to Lochailort Inn, whose highly individual proprietor, Uilleamena Macrae, I knew well. Uilleamena was a very beautiful woman. She was of humble origin, but she had been a Hollywood actress in the days of silent films; she had been a medium for Conan Doyle's spiritualistic experiments; and she had been taught logic—rather unsuccessfully—by an uncle who had become a professor in America. She was, I think, one of the warmest, most human people I have ever known and her faults were all on the surface. As an innkeeper she was capricious; lunch might cost anything between two shillings and a pound, according to her mood, and the bar would remain closed for days or even weeks because she had forgotten to order new stock. She was more concerned with the welfare of a host of animals, ranging from a parrot (I can still hear Uilleamena and the parrot screeching "hullo" to each other in demoniac crescendo) to geese and Shetland ponies, than with that of tourists. (She told me she had

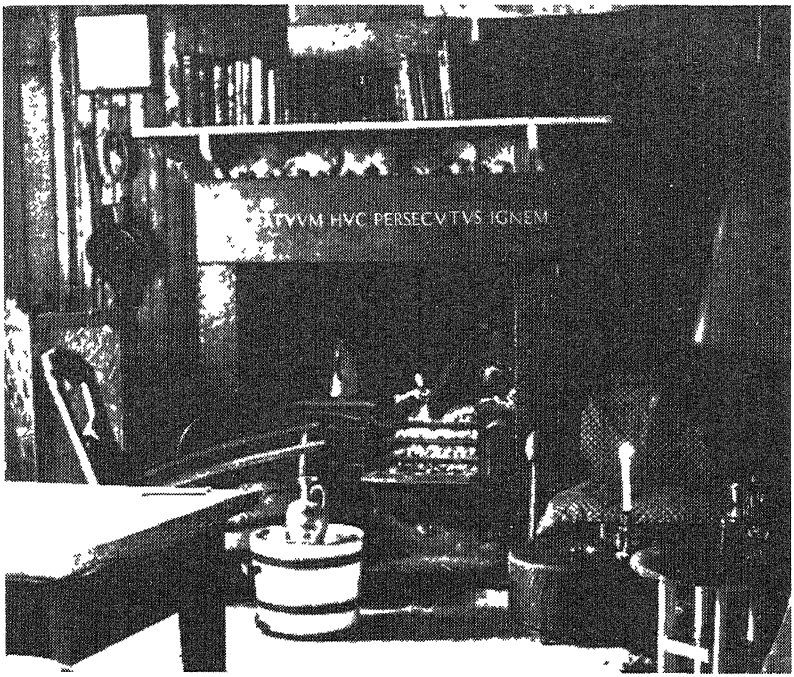
once given chicken food to some visitors, telling them it was porridge, and that they had asked for more.) Yet her personality was so spontaneous and endearing that her death a few years ago made a hole in more hearts than she would have known, though she left a truly phenomenal amount of debts behind her. It was perhaps a measure of her personality that she was able to owe her grocer £3,000.

Uilleamena sold me two small chests whose drawers open and close only with the most careful coaxing, two kitchen tables, a bed, three kitchen chairs and a threadbare Brussels carpet. They were the last bulk of furniture that ever came into Camusfeàrna; the rest has just grown, found on the beach or constructed by ingenious guests, for importations have been confined to what can be carried by hand down the hill. Into this category fall a surprising number of objects that may be used to convert fish boxes into furniture. Half of one wall, for example, is now occupied by what appears to be a very large sofa; actually it is all fish boxes, covered with foam rubber under a corduroy cover.

Because of the beaches there is a continuous sense of anticipation at Camusfeàrna, as though a collector of period furniture might any morning find some rare piece lying in the street before his door. In my second or third year at the house, I said, "We really lack only one thing now—a clothes-basket." A few weeks later a large stately clothes-basket came up on the beach, completely undamaged.

There is much pathos in the small jetsam that lies along the tide lines: battered children's toys; a hand-carved wooden egg-cup marked "John"; the scattered skeleton of a small dog. Some things challenge fantasy to account for their existence. Two broom handles, tied into the form of a cross by a woman's plastic belt; a scrap of sailcloth with the words "not yet" scrawled across it in blue paint; a felt Homburg hat so small that it appeared to have been made for a diminutive monkey—round these and many others one may weave idle tapestries of mystery.

THAT FIRST night as I lay down to sleep, with my head pillowed upon Jonnie's soft flank, I was aware of the thump of rabbits' feet about the sand-dune warren, and the restless piping of oyster catchers waiting for the turn of the tide; these were middle-distance sounds against the muffled roar of the waterfall that is the undertone to all other sound at Camusfeàrna.



The kitchen-living-room at Camusfeàrna. The Latin motto, translated, reads: "It is no will-o'-the-wisp that I have followed here"

In the British Isles it is a strange sensation to lie down knowing that there is no human being within a mile and a half in any direction. It brings a sense of isolation that is the very opposite of loneliness in a city, where one is alone among other human beings. To be quite alone where there are no other human beings is sharply exhilarating, as though some pressure had suddenly been lifted, allowing an intense awareness of one's surroundings and of the teeming sub-human life around one.

The first thing I saw in the morning, as I went down to the burn for water, was a group of five stags, alert but unconcerned, staring from the primrose bank opposite. It was early April, but one of them still carried his horns, wide and strong, with thirteen points. These stags were important to me, as were the red-deer calves who have no fear of men, the ravens, the seals in the bay. These were my neighbours.

Once, on the rocks, I picked up a brown seal pup no more than a day or so old. He was warm and tubby and squirmingly affectionate, and I set him down again with some reluctance. But he was not to be so easily left, for he came shuffling and humping along at my heels. I tried dodging behind rocks, but he discovered me with amazing agility. Finally I scrambled down to the boat and rowed away, but he was quickly there beside me, muzzling an oar while his frantic mother snorted twenty yards away. I was in desperation to know what to do when suddenly he responded to her call and the two went off together, the pup no doubt to receive the lecture of his life.

OF MY HUMAN neighbours, the MacKinnons, I have so far said little. Calum Murdo MacKinnon, who is the local road mender, is sometimes called "Calum the Road," as I have known elsewhere a "John the Hearse," a "Ronald the Shooter" and a "Ronald Donald the Dummy"—the last not as an aspersion but simply because he was a mute. Calum Murdo is a small wiry man in middle age; it might not be expected that, living in this remarkable isolation, he would be able to quote the greater part of the *Golden Treasury* or to have well-informed views on politics. Yet these are the facts; it must have been a sad disappointment to him to find his new neighbour less well informed on many subjects than himself.

With his wife, Morag, a woman of fine-drawn iron beauty softened by humour, I found an immediate common ground in a love of living creatures. One hears much of the spiritual descendants of St. Francis, those who experience an immediate intimate communication with bird and beast, but I had never encountered one of them in the flesh until I met Morag. What success I have with animals is due solely to patience, experience, and a conscious effort to put myself in the animal's position, but I do not think any of these things have been necessary to her. Animals respond to her immediately as if she were one of themselves, with a trust and respect that few of us receive from our own kind.

A single instance will be enough for illustration. Morag loved the wild swans who came every winter to a small loch across the road. From the house she would call a greeting to them several times a day, so that they came to know her voice. One night she heard them restless and calling, and when she opened the door in the morning she saw

that two parent birds were at the edge of the loch, fussing round a cygnet that seemed in some way to be captive. Morag walked towards them, calling all the while. The cygnet struggled and beat the water piteously with his wings, but he was held fast below the peaty surface, and the parents, instead of retreating, remained calling at his side. Morag waded out, and suddenly the cygnet turned and struggled towards her. Groping in the water beneath him, her hand came upon a wire, on which she pulled until she felt a rusty steel trap clamped to the cygnet's leg. She eased the jaws open, and as she did this the parents swam in on either side of her, as tame as domestic ducks.

The swans stayed for a week or more after that, and now they would not wait for her to call to them before greeting her; every time she opened her door their silver-sweet, bell-like voices chimed to her from the lochan across the road.

The MacKinnon household became my only link with the remote world of shops and post offices. Mail comes to the railhead at our shopping village, thirty-odd miles away, then is carried by motor launch to a tiny village five miles from Druimfiaclach, where a Land Rover takes over and distributes it among the scattered dwellings. Occasionally it is too rough for the launch to put out, and it is not unknown for the whole mailbag to be sent to Skye through oversight or petulance.

The exchange of letters often takes a full week, and this has led my friends to the copious use of telegrams. Telegrams may be delivered by five steep and weary miles bicycling from the post office, followed by a mile and a half on foot. The village postmaster is a man with an extreme sense of duty; the first telegram I ever received at Camusfeàrna was when, on a sweltering summer's day, he stood exhausted before my door bearing a message which read, "Many happy returns of the day." After that I persuaded him, with great difficulty, to exercise his own judgment as to whether or not a telegram was urgent.

Telegrams between the West Highlands and England are liable to a little confusion in transit. I once decided that a diet composed largely of shell-fish might suitably be varied by rabbit, so I telegraphed the owner of the estate. The telegram he received read: "May I please shoot Robert and if so where?" The reply to this sadistic request being in the affirmative, I shot Robert morning and evening, and he went far to solve my supply problem.

General supplies reach me by the same three-stage route as the mail, but there is surprisingly little in our shops, partly because of a Foolish Virgin attitude to the necessities of life. Electricity has only recently come to our district, though not to me; before that people used paraffin lamps and, often, Primus stoves. Yet, despite our capricious electrical service, every shop immediately stopped stocking paraffin, methylated spirits and candles. The friendly spirit of the Highlands is, however, equal to this situation: once I sent an SOS for methylated spirits to the village and received an odd-looking package in return. Inside was a pencilled note: "Sorry no methylated spirits but am sending two pounds of sausages instead."

WHEN I AM away from Camusfeàrna and think of it, it is of the waterfall that I think first. Its voice is in one's ears day and night; one falls asleep to it, dreams with it and wakens to it; and if I hold a shell to my ear it is not the sea's murmuring that comes to me but the sound of the Camusfeàrna waterfall. But if it is the waterfall that seems the soul of Camusfeàrna, it is the sea that gives it its perpetual mystery and excitement.

On warm summer evenings, the MacKinnon children would come down the hill to bathe in the sea, and long before I could hear their treble voices Jonnie would prick his ears and whine, and his tail would scuff softly on the stone floor.

One evening I was roused from my reading by the urgent excitement of the cries from the beach. I went out to find the sun low and the sea so pale and polished that the figures of the children thigh-deep in the shallows showed in almost pure silhouette, bronze-coloured limbs and torsos edged with yellow light. They were shouting and laughing and scooping up the water with their hands, and all the time there shot up from the surface a glittering spray of small gold and silver fish.

When I reached the water myself it was like wading in silver treacle; our bare legs pushed against a packed mass of little fish. To scoop and scatter them, to shout and to laugh, was irresistible. We were fish-drunk, fish-crazy, fish-happy in that shining orange bubble of air and water.

It was not for some minutes that I began to wonder what had driven this titanic shoal of herring fry into the bay. Then I saw that a hundred yards out the smooth swell of the incoming tide was ruffled by flurries

of mackerel. They had driven the fry headlong before them and held them in the bay; but now the pursuers too were unable to go back. They were in turn harried from seaward by a school of porpoises. I wondered that the porpoises had not long since glutted themselves and gone; then I saw that their own return to the open water was cut off. Beyond them, black against the sunset water, rose the towering sabre fin of a killer whale, his single terrible form controlling by its mere presence the billions of lives between himself and the shore.

A killer or two like this comes every year to Camusfeàrna, but I have rarely seen sharks. Only once were they close inshore, and then I was too crushed with sadness and weariness to pay much attention. I had been sitting up all night with Jonnie, who was at the edge of death from pneumonia. He was a dog of enormous strength, but he was growing old and, though he survived that time, the writing was on the wall.

When I was away from Camusfeàrna he lived with Morag, to whom he was devoted, and it was with Morag, some months later, that he died at last. He developed cancer, and I was too cowardly to travel north and watch my old friend given a lethal injection, as in all humanity he had to be.

MANY PEOPLE find an especial attachment for a dog whose companionship has bridged widely different phases in their lives. Jonnie and his forebears had spanned my boyhood, maturity and the war years. I have never had another dog since Jonnie, and I have never wanted one. But after his death, my home seemed a little lifeless, and I began to review in my mind various animals that might keep me company. Having in my childhood kept pets ranging from hedgehogs to herons, I was familiar with a considerable list of creatures, but after a while I realized that none of them would meet my present requirements.

Early in 1956 I travelled with Wilfred Thesiger, the Near East expert, to spend two months among the little-known Marsh Arabs of southern Iraq. By then it had crossed my mind that I might like to keep an otter, and that Camusfeàrna, ringed by water, would be a suitable spot for this experiment. I mentioned this to Thesiger and he replied that I had better get one in the Tigris marshes before I came home, for there they were as common as mosquitoes, and were often tamed by the Arabs.

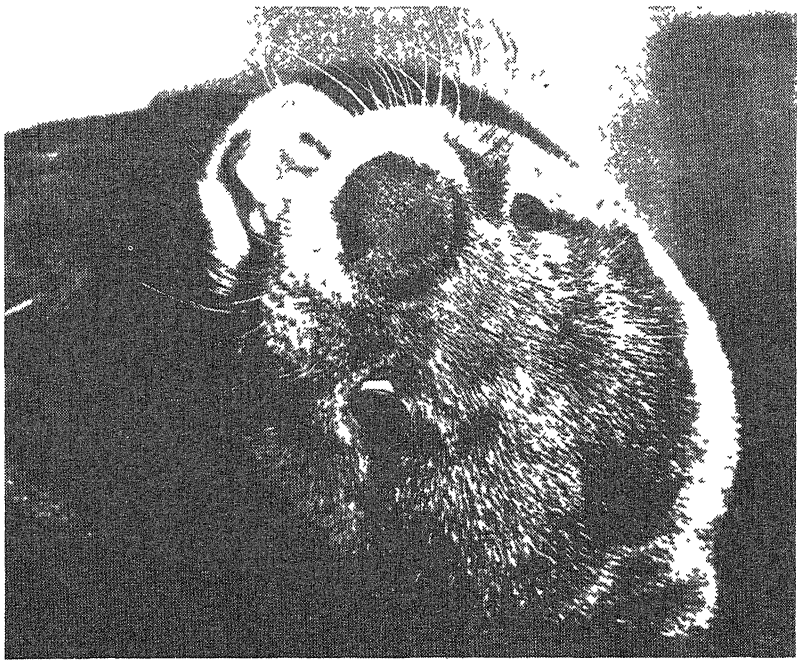
We spent the better part of those months squatting cross-legged in the bottom of a *tarada,* or war canoe, travelling in a leisurely, timeless way between the scattered reed-built villages of the great delta marsh; and towards the end of our journey I did acquire an otter cub. At Basra, where we had gone to collect our mail, we found that Thesiger's had arrived but that mine had not; so I arranged to join him later. Two days before we were to meet, I came into my bedroom in the Consulate-General to find two Arabs squatting on the floor. Beside them lay a sack that squirmed from time to time. They handed me a note from Thesiger. "Here is your otter. You may want to take it direct to London —it would be a handful in the *tarada.*"

With the opening of that sack began a phase of my life that in the essential sense has not yet ended, and may not end before I do. It is a thraldom to otters, an otter fixation, that I have found to be shared by most people who have ever owned one.

The creature that emerged, not greatly disconcerted, on to the floor of the bedroom did not resemble anything so much as a very small dragon. From head to tail he was coated with symmetrical pointed scales of mud, between whose tips was visible a soft velvet fur like that of a chocolate-brown mole. It was not for another month that I contrived to remove the last of his camouflage and see him in his true colours. Yet even on that first day I recognized that he was an otter of a species that I had never seen, resembling only a curious otter skin that I had bought in one of the marsh villages. I called him Mijbil, after a sheik with whom we had been staying.

For the first twenty-four hours Mijbil was aloof and indifferent, choosing to sleep on the floor as far from my bed as possible, and to accept food and water as though they were things that had appeared before him without human assistance. Food presented a problem, but Robert Angorly, a British-educated Iraqi friend, brought me every day half a dozen small reddish fish from the Tigris. These Mijbil consumed with gusto, holding them upright between his forepaws, tail end uppermost, and eating them like a stick of rock, always with five crunches on the left-hand side of the jaw alternating with five crunches on the right.

Mijbil and I enjoyed the Consul-General's long-suffering hospitality for a fortnight. The second night Mij came on to my bed in the small



At first, Mijbil kept a wary distance

hours and remained asleep in the crook of my knees until morning, and during that day he began to take a much too keen interest in his surroundings. I fashioned a collar, or rather a body-belt, for his head was no wider than his neck, and took him on a lead to the bathroom, where for half an hour he went wild with joy in the water, plunging and rolling in it, shooting up and down the length of the bath underwater, and making enough slosh and splash for a hippo. This, I was to learn, is a characteristic of otters; every drop of water must be, so to speak, extended; a bowl must at once be overturned, or, if it will not overturn, be sat in and sploshed in until it overflows. To otters, water must be kept on the move and made to do things; when static it is as wasted and provoking as a buried talent.

Two days later Mijbil escaped from my bedroom as I entered it, and by the time I had caught up with him he was in the bathroom fumbling

at the chromium taps with his paws. I watched, amazed by this exhibition of intelligence; in less than a minute he had turned the tap enough to produce a dribble of water, and, after a moment or two of distraction at his success, achieved the full flow. (He had, in fact, been fortunate to turn the tap the right way; on subsequent occasions he would as often as not screw it up still tighter, chittering with irritation at its failure to co-operate.)

The Consulate-General had an enclosed tennis court in which I exercised Mijbil. Here I established after a few days that he would follow me without a lead and come to me when I called his name. By the end of a week he had accepted his dependence on me; with this security established he began to display the principal otter characteristic of perpetual play. Very few species of animal habitually play after they are adult, but otters are one of the exceptions to this rule and in the wild state their play does not even require a partner. They will play alone for hours with any convenient floating object in the water, and at Camusfeàrna all the otters' "holts," or dens, contain a profusion of small shells and round stones that can only have been carried in for toys.

Mij would spend hours shuffling a rubber ball round the room like a soccer player, using all four feet to dribble the ball, and he could also throw it, with a powerful flick of the neck, to a surprising height and distance. These games he would play either by himself or with me, but the really steady play of an otter, born of a sense of well-being and a full stomach, seems to be when it lies on its back and juggles small objects between its paws. This it does with the concentrated absorption and dexterity of a conjurer perfecting a trick. Marbles became Mij's favourite toys for this pastime, and he would lie on his back rolling two or more of them up and down his wide, flat belly without ever dropping one to the floor, or, with forepaws upstretched, rolling them between his palms for minutes on end.

Even during that first fortnight in Basra I learned a lot of Mij's language, a language largely shared by other races of otter. The sounds are widely different in range. The simplest is the call note: a short, anxious, penetrating, though not loud, mixture between a whistle and a chirp. There is also a query, used at closer quarters; Mij would enter a room, for instance, and ask whether there was anyone in it by the word

"Hah?" uttered in a loud, harsh whisper. If he saw preparations being made to take him out or to the bath, he would stand at the door making a musical bubbling sound. But it was the chirp, ranging from a single querulous note to a continuous flow of chitter, that was Mij's main means of communication. He had one other note: a high caterwaul, a sort of screaming wail, that meant unequivocally that he was very angry, and if provoked further would bite.

The otter's jaws are enormously powerful. Their teeth can crunch into instant pulp fish heads that seem as hard as stone. Like a puppy that nibbles one's hands, they seem to find the use of their mouths the most natural outlet for expression; I appreciate what efforts my otters have made to be gentle, but their playful nips are gauged to the sensitivity of an otter's, rather than a human, skin. Mij used to look hurt and surprised when scolded for what must have seemed to him the most meticulous gentleness, and though he learned to be soft-mouthed with me he remained all his life somewhat hail-fellow-well-bit with strangers.

The days passed peacefully at Basra, but I dreaded the prospect of transporting Mij to England. Finally I booked a Trans-World flight to Paris, with a doubtful Air France booking on the same evening to London, where at that time I had a flat.

Trans-World insisted that Mij should be packed into a box of not more than eighteen inches square, and that this box must be carried on the floor at my feet. Since Mij's body was at that time perhaps a little over a foot long and his tail another foot, the designing of the box and its construction by native craftsmen caused me many anxious hours. Zinc-lined, it was delivered on the afternoon before my departure, and to my inexperienced eye it appeared as nearly ideal as could be contrived.

The flight was at 9.15 p.m. I put Mij into the box an hour before we left, so that he would become accustomed to it. I then left for a hurried meal. When I returned, barely in time to reach the airport for the flight, I was confronted with an appalling spectacle. There was complete silence from inside the box, but round its air holes and the hinged lid, blood had trickled and dried on the white wood.

I whipped off the padlock and tore open the lid, and Mij, exhausted and blood-spattered, whimpered and tried to climb up my leg. He had torn the zinc lining to shreds, scratching his mouth, nose and paws, and had left it jutting in spiky ribbons all round the inside of the box.

When I had removed the last of the zinc, it was just ten minutes until flight time, and the airport was five miles distant. It was hard to bring myself to put the miserable Mij back into that box, which now represented to him a torture chamber, but I forced myself to do it. Then began a journey the like of which I hope I shall never know again.

I sat in the back of the car with the box beside me as the Arab driver tore through the streets of Basra like a ricocheting bullet. Donkeys reared, bicycles swerved wildly; out in the suburbs goats stampeded and poultry found unguessed powers of flight. Mij cried unceasingly in the box, and both of us were hurled to and fro and up and down like drinks in a cocktail shaker. Exactly as we drew to a screeching stop before the airport entrance I heard a splintering sound from the box beside me, and saw Mij's nose force up the lid. He had summoned all the strength in his small body and torn one of the hinges clean out of the wood.

As I was rushed through the customs by infuriated officials I was trying to hold down the lid of the box with one hand, and with the other, using a screwdriver purloined from the chauffeur to force back the screws into the splintered wood. I knew that it could be no more than a temporary measure, and my imagination boggled at the thought of the next twenty-four hours.

It was perhaps my only stroke of fortune that the seat booked for me was at the extreme front of the aircraft, so that I had a bulkhead before me instead of another seat. The other passengers stared curiously as I struggled up the gangway with a horrifyingly vocal box, and I had a moment of real dismay when I saw my immediate neighbour was to be a *soignée* American woman in early middle age. She would, I thought, have little tolerance for a draggled and dirty otter cub. Then the engines roared and we were taxiing out to take off, whatever was to happen now there could be no escape, for the next stop was Cairo.

I had brought a brief-case full of old newspapers and a parcel of fish, and with these scant resources I prepared myself to withstand a siege. I arranged newspapers to cover all the floor round my feet, rang for the air hostess, and asked her to keep the fish in a cool place. I have retained the most profound admiration for that air hostess; she was the very queen of her kind. The events of the last half-hour had shaken my equilibrium, and I was not too coherent, but she took it all in her

graceful sheer-nylon stride and received the ill-wrapped fish as though I were royalty depositing a jewel-case with her for safe-keeping. Then she turned and spoke with her fellow American on my left. Would I not prefer, she inquired, to have my pet on my knee? My neighbour had no objection. I could have kissed her hand in gratitude. But, not knowing otters, I was quite unprepared for what followed.

I unlocked the padlock and opened the lid, and Mij was out like a flash. He dodged my fumbling hands with an eel-like wriggle and disappeared. As I tried to get into the gangway, I could follow his progress by a wave of disturbance among the passengers not unlike that caused by the passage of a fox through a hen run. There were squawks, shrieks and a flapping of coats, and half-way down the fuselage a woman stood up on her seat screaming, "A rat! A rat!"

By now I was in the gangway myself, and, catching sight of Mij's tail disappearing beneath the legs of a portly white-turbaned Indian, I tried a flying tackle, landing flat on my face. I missed Mij's tail, but found myself grasping the sandalled foot of the Indian's female companion; furthermore my face was inexplicably covered in curry. I staggered up babbling inarticulate apology, and the Indian gave me a long, silent, utterly expressionless stare. I was, however, glad to observe that something, possibly the curry, had won over my fellow passengers, and that they were regarding me now as a harmless clown rather than as a dangerous lunatic. The air hostess stepped into the breach again.

"Perhaps," she said with the most charming smile, "it would be better if I find the animal and bring it to you." She would probably have said the same had Mij been an escaped rogue elephant. I explained that Mij might bite a stranger, but she did not think so. I returned to my seat.

I was craning my neck back over the seat trying to follow the hunt when suddenly I heard at my feet a chitter of recognition, and Mij bounded on to my knee and began to nuzzle my face and neck. In all the strange world of the aircraft I was the only familiar thing to be found, and in that first spontaneous return was sown the seed of the absolute trust that he accorded me for the rest of his life.

For a few hours he slept in my lap, and whenever he appeared restless I rang for fish and water, for otters are extremely bad at doing nothing. They cannot, as a dog does, lie still and awake; they are either asleep

or entirely absorbed in some activity. If there is no acceptable toy, or if they are in a mood of frustration, they will, apparently with the utmost good humour, set about laying the land waste. There is, I am convinced, something positively provoking to an otter about order and tidiness in any form, and the greater the state of confusion that they can create about them the more contented they feel. This is due in part to intense inquisitiveness. An otter must find out everything and have a hand in everything; most of all he must know what lies inside any container or beyond any obstruction, and he has an uncanny mechanical sense of how to get things open.

We had been flying for perhaps five hours when one of these moods descended upon Mijbil. It opened comparatively innocuously, with an assault upon the newspapers spread carefully round my feet, and in a minute or two the place looked like a street upon which royalty has been given a ticker-tape welcome. Then he turned his attentions to his travelling box, which was filled with fine wood shavings. First he put his head and shoulders in and began to throw these out backward at enormous speed; then he got in bodily and lay on his back, using all four feet in a pedalling motion to hoist out the remainder. I was doing my best to cope with the litter, but it was like a ship's pumps working against a leak too great for them, and I was hopelessly behind in the race when he turned his attention to my neighbour's canvas travel bag on the floor beside him. The zipper gave him pause for no more than seconds; he yanked it back and was in head first, throwing out magazines, handkerchiefs, gloves, bottles of pills. By the grace of God my neighbour was sleeping profoundly; I managed, unobserved, to haul Mij out by the tail and cram the things back somehow. I hoped that she might leave the aircraft at Cairo before the outrage was discovered, and to my infinite relief she did so.

I think it was at Cairo that I realized what a complex creature I had acquired. I left the aircraft last, and during the forty minutes that we were grounded he was no more trouble than a Pekinese dog. I put the lead on him and exercised him round the edge of the airfield; there were jets landing and taking off with an appalling din all round us, but he gave no sign of noticing them, and when I went into the refreshment-room for a drink he sat down at my feet as if this were the only life to which he was accustomed.

My troubles really began at Paris, an interminable time later. Mij had slept from time to time, but it was by now more than thirty-six hours since I had even dozed. I had to change airports, and there was no alternative to putting him back into his box. However, the box was now useless, with one hinge dangling.

When the plane was half an hour from Paris I explained my predicament to the air hostess. She went forward, and returned after a few minutes saying that one of the crew would nail down the box and rope it for me. She warned me at the same time that under Air France's regulations the box from Paris onward would have to travel in the freight compartment.

Mij was sleeping on his back inside my jacket, and I had to steel myself to betray his trust and listen to his pathetic cries as he was nailed up in what had become to me suddenly reminiscent of a coffin. There is a little-understood factor that is responsible for the deaths of many wild animals in shipment; it is generally known as "travel shock," and I was afraid it might kill Mijbil inside that box. We disembarked in torrential rain, and after an hour's wait at Orly Airport, during which Mij's cries gave place to a terrifying silence, I and three other London-bound passengers were hustled into an aircraft. I had clung to the unwieldy box all this time, but now Mij disappeared into the darkness of a luggage transporter.

When we arrived at Amsterdam instead of London, Air France was profusely apologetic. There was no flight to London for a further fifty-five minutes. No one seemed to have a very clear idea of what had happened to any of the luggage belonging to the London-bound passengers, but a helpful official suggested that it might still be in Paris.

I went to the Air France office and let the tattered shreds of my self-control fly to the winds. At my elbow an American businessman was threatening legal action. When the shindy was at its height another official arrived and said calmly that our luggage was now aboard a British European Airways plane due for take-off in seven minutes, and would we kindly take our seats.

Muttering, "I'm going to cast my personal eyes on that baggage. They can't make a displaced person out of me," my American companion spoke for all of us waifs. So we cast our personal eyes on the freight, and there was Mij's box, silent in a corner.

It was the small hours of the morning when we reached London Airport. As there are fortunately no quarantine regulations for otters, the box and all my luggage were soon loaded on to a car and we were on the last lap of our journey. What meant still more to me was that from the box now came a faint inquiring chitter.

Mijbil had in fact displayed a characteristic shared, I believe, by many animals: an apparent step on the way to travel-shock death, but in fact a powerful buffer against it. Many animals seem to be able to go into a deep sleep, a coma almost, as a voluntary act; it is an escape mechanism that comes into operation when the animal's inventiveness in the face of adversity has failed to help. It is almost a norm of animals kept in cramped quarters in zoos and in pet stores. I came to recognize it later in Mij when he travelled in cars, a thing he hated; after a few minutes of frenzy he would curl himself into a tight ball and banish entirely the distasteful world about him.

He was wide awake once more by the time we reached my door, and when it closed behind me I felt a moment of deep satisfaction, almost of triumph. I prised open the box, and Mijbil clambered into my arms to greet me with a frenzy of affection that I felt I had hardly merited.

In London I lived in one large room with a sleeping gallery, and a penthouse at the back containing kitchen, bathroom and box-room These unconventional premises held certain advantages for an otter, for the box-room opening from the bathroom provided quarters in which he might be left for short periods with all his essential requirements. But just how short those periods would be—a maximum of four or five hours—had never struck me until Mij had become the centre point round which my life revolved. Otters that have been reared by human beings demand human company and affection; without these they quickly become unhappy.

Exhausted as he was that first night, Mij had not been out of his box for five minutes before he set out with terrifying enthusiasm to explore his new quarters. I had gone to the kitchen to find fish for him, expected by pre-arrangement with my charlady, but I had hardly got there before I heard the first crash of breaking china in the room behind me. The fish and the bath solved the problem temporarily, for when he had eaten he went wild with joy in the water and romped ecstatically for a

full half-hour; but it was clear that my crowded and vulnerable flat would require considerable alteration if it was to remain a home for both of us. Meanwhile sleep seemed long overdue, and I saw only one solution; I laid a sleeping bag on the sofa, and anchored Mij to the sofa leg by his lead.



"An established selection of toys"

I have never been able to make up my mind whether certain aspects of otter behaviour merely chance to resemble that of human beings, or whether there is actual mimicry of the human foster parent. Mij, anyway, seemed to regard me closely as I composed myself on my back with a cushion under my head; then, with an air of knowing exactly what to do, he clambered up beside me and worked his body into the sleeping bag until he lay on his back inside it with his head on the cushion beside mine and his forepaws in the air. In this position, such as a child devises for its Teddy-bear, Mij heaved an enormous sigh and was instantly asleep.

MIJ AND I remained in London for nearly a month, while, as my landlord put it, the flat came to look like a cross between a monkey-house and a furniture repository. In the box-room Mij had a tattered arm-chair of his own, and an electric heater; a wire gate was fitted to the stairs; the telephone was enclosed in a box (whose fastening he early learned to undo) and the wiring in hardboard tunnels that gave the place the appearance of a power house.

All these precautions were necessary if Mij were occasionally to be excluded from the studio itself. But if he thought that he had been excluded for too long, especially from visitors whose acquaintance he wished to make, he would set about laying waste with extraordinary invention. There was nothing haphazard about the demonstrations he planned; into them went all the patience and ingenuity of his remarkable brain and all the agility of his muscular little body.

One evening, for example, I had confined Mij to the gallery in deference to a female visitor who feared for her nylons. He appeared, after a few moments, balancing adroitly on the top of the gallery railing. At various points along the length of this railing were suspended decorative objects: a Cretan shepherd's bag, a dagger, and other things that now elude me. Purposefully, and with an air of enormous self-satisfaction, Mij began to chew through the cords from which these ornaments hung, pausing to watch each victim crash to the floor below, then carefully renewing his precarious progress along the rail to the next. My visitor and I stood waiting to catch the more fragile items as they fell, and I remember that when the last fruit, as it were, had fallen from the bough she turned to me with a sigh and said, "Don't you ever feel that this just can't go on?"

More usually, however, Mij would play for hours at a time with what soon became an established selection of toys: marbles, ping-pong balls, rubber fruit, and a terrapin shell I had brought back from his native marshes. With a ping-pong ball he invented a game of his own. I had a damaged suit-case the lid of which, when closed, sloped from one end to the other. Mij discovered that if he placed the ball on the high end it would run down the length of the suit-case. He would dash round to the other end to ambush its arrival as it reached the drop to the floor, grab it and trot off with it to the high end once more.

These games were adequate for perhaps half of the time he spent indoors and awake, but several times a day he needed a prolonged romp with a human playmate. Tunnelling under the carpet and affecting to believe himself invisible, he would shoot out with a squeak of triumph if a foot passed within range; or he would dive inside the loose cover of the sofa and play tigers from behind it; or he would simply lay siege to me as a puppy does, bouncing round in a frenzy of excited chirps and launching a series of tip-and-run raids.

I soon found an infallible way to distract his attention if he became too excitable. I would take the terrapin shell, wrap it in a towel, and knot the loose ends tightly across. He came to know these preparations, and would wait absolutely motionless until I handed him the bundle; then he would straddle it with his forearms, sink his teeth in the knots, and begin to hump and shuffle round the room in a deceptively aimless-seeming manner. Deceptive, because no matter how complex the knots he would have them all undone in five or ten minutes. At the end of this performance he liked, and seemed to expect, applause, and he would then bring the towel and the terrapin shell to be tied up again.

Outside, I exercised him on a lead and, like a dog, he soon showed preference for certain corners at which dogs of all sorts had left stimulating messages; messages that were, perhaps, the more fascinating for being, as it were, in a foreign language.

I was afraid to allow him to meet any dog nose-to-nose, and for his part he seemed largely indifferent to them. The only time that I was conscious of some mutual recognition taking place was one morning when he refused to be parted from a new toy, a large rubber ball painted in gaudy segments. This ball was too big for his mouth, so that he could only carry it sticking out from one side of his jaws like a gigantic gum-boil, and thus encumbered he set off briskly up the street, tugging at his lead. Rounding the first street corner we came face-to-face with a very fat spaniel, unattended and sedately carrying in its mouth a bundle of newspapers. The respective loads of otter and dog made it difficult for either of them to turn its head far as they came abreast, but their eyes rolled sideways with what appeared to me a wild surmise, and when they were a few paces past each other suddenly stopped dead for a moment, as though arrested by some momentary mental revelation.

Mij quickly developed certain compulsive habits on our walks, akin, clearly, to the rituals of children who on their way to and from school must avoid stepping on a crack, or pass to the outside of every second lamp-post. There was more than one street in which Mij would use one pavement only, refusing with dug-in toes to be led to the other side. On his way home, but never on his way out, he would tug me towards a low wall along the front of a school, jump up on it, and gallop the full length of its thirty yards, to the hopeless distraction of both pupils and staff within.



Mijbil reaching for a lost marble

Many of his actions, indeed, appeared ritual. I think that few people who keep wild creatures realize the enormous security value of routine in keeping an animal contented. Every living creature exists by a routine of some kind, and the small rituals of that routine are the landmarks, the boundaries of security.

It was about this time that Mij delivered his first serious, intentional bite. He was fed now mainly upon eels, which I had learned to be the staple food of many races of otter and which I gave him in the bath. On this occasion Mij elected to bring an eel out and eat it in the studio. To this, though he was sodden with water and the eel very slimy, there seemed no alternative, for it is folly to try to take away from a wild animal its natural prey; but when after a few mouthfuls he decided to carry it upstairs I determined to call a halt, visualizing a soaking, eel-slimed bed.

I put on three pairs of gloves, the outermost being a pair of heavily

padded flying gauntlets. I caught up with him half-way up the stairway; he laid down the eel, put a paw on it, and hummed at me, a high continuous hum that could break out into a wail. I talked quietly to him, telling him that he couldn't possibly hurt me and that I was going to take the eel back to the bathroom. The humming became much louder. I bent down and put my heavily gloved hand upon the eel. He screamed at me; then, as I began to lift it, he bit His teeth passed through the three layers of glove and met in the middle of my hand with an audible crunch. He let go almost in the same instant, and rolled on his back squirming with apology. I still held the eel; I carried it back to the bath, where he refused to pay any further attention to it, fussing over me and muzzling me with little squeals of solicitude.

There were two bones broken in my hand, and for a week it was the size of a boxing glove, very painful, and an acute embarrassment to me with those who from the first had been sceptical of Mij. I had been given a sharp reminder that though he might carry rubber balls through the streets he was not a spaniel.

As may be imagined, Mij caused no small stir in his walks through London. It was not strange that the average Londoner should not recognize an otter. Otters belong to a comparatively small group of animals called mustelines, which includes the badger, weasel, stoat, mongoose and mink, among others. Now, in the London streets, I faced a barrage of conjecture that hit on practically everything from a baby seal to a squirrel. "Is that a walrus, mister?" reduced me to giggles outside Harrod's, and "a hippo" made my day outside Cruft's Dog Show. A beaver, a bear cub, a newt, a leopard—one, apparently, that had changed his spots—even, with some dim recollection of school-room science, a "brontosaur"; Mij was anything but an otter.

But the question for which I awarded the highest score—a question hinting that someone had blundered when Mij was formed—came from a Herculean labourer engaged, mightily and alone, upon digging a hole in the street. I was still far from him when he laid down his pick, put his hands on his hips, and stared, an outraged, affronted stare, as though to say that he was not one upon whom to play jokes. I came abreast of him; he spat, glared and then growled, " 'Ere, mister—*what is that supposed to be?*"

His question reminded me of my own ignorance; I did not, in fact,

know what Mij was supposed to be. I knew, certainly, that he was an otter; but, judging from the zoological literature I had read, he must be one of a species which, if known to the scientific world, was at least not known to live in the marshes of Iraq.

I telephoned to the Natural History department of the British Museum, and the same afternoon Mr. Robert Hayman arrived at my flat to examine Mij. There is in the serious zoological world a dead-panness, an unwillingness for committal, that must rival that of consulting physicians. Hayman was too competent not to know that he was looking at an unfamiliar animal, but he did not betray this. He took such measurements as Mij would permit, examined him closely, peered at his teeth, and left.

In due course, Mij's new race was proclaimed. Hayman summoned me to the museum to see the cabinets of otter skins from all over Asia. Various sub-species similar to Mij ranged over most of Eastern Asia, but none had been recorded west of India, and none had Mijbil's chocolate colour.

There are very few people, and even fewer amateur zoologists, who stumble upon a sizeable mammal previously unknown to science; the few who had given their own names to species—Steller's eider, Sharpe's crow, Grant's gazelle and so on—had been surrounded for me as a child with an aura of romance; they were creators, partaking a little of the deity. So, when Hayman suggested that the new otter should bear my name, something small and shrill from my nursery days shouted inside me that I could become one of my early gods. ("Can I have it for my own?" we used to ask when we were small. "For my *very* own?" Here, surely, was an animal of my very own; every animal that looked like it would bear my name for ever.)

So Mij and all his race became *Lutrogale perspicillata maxwelli*. There was now a Maxwell's otter.

IN EARLY MAY I felt I could wait no longer to see Mij playing under the Camusfeàrna waterfall. I went by way of Monreith, my family home in the south of Scotland, where Mij could taste a guarded liberty before his emancipation to total freedom.

Travelling with otters is a very expensive business. There was no question of again confining Mij to a box; he therefore travelled with me

in a first-class sleeper, a form of transport he enjoyed hugely. He soon decided that in the wash-basin lay the greatest pleasure potential; he curled up in it, his form fitting its contours as an apple fits a dumpling, and his paws began increasingly feverish experiments with the tap. It was, however, of a type new to him, operating by downward pressure, and not a drop could he draw from it for a full five minutes; at last, trying to lever himself into an upright position, he put his full weight on the tap handle and found himself, literally, in his element.

Later that evening an incident bade fair to bring the whole train to a stop. We were roaring up through the Midlands in summer dusk and I was looking out of the window, for it had not occurred to me that Mij could, in that confined space, get into any serious mischief. It had not crossed my mind that by standing on the piled luggage he could reach the communication cord. This, however, was precisely what he had done, and when my eye lit on him he had it firmly between his teeth while exploring with his paws the tunnel into which its ends disappeared.

As I started towards him he removed his fingers from the recess and braced them against the wall for the tug. I caught him round the shoulders, but he retained his grip, and as I pulled him I saw the chain bulge ominously outward; I changed my tactics and pushed him towards it, but he merely braced his arms afresh. Suddenly inspiration came to me. Mij was extremely ticklish, particularly over the ribs. I began to tickle him feverishly, and at once his jaws relaxed into the foolish grin he reserved for such occasions and he began to squirm. Later he tried several times to reach the cord again, but I had redisposed the suit-cases.

It was in unfamiliar surroundings such as these that Mij appeared most often to copy my actions; that night, though at home he slept inside my bed with his head at my feet, he arranged himself as he had on the first night at my flat, on his back with his head on the pillow and his arms outside the bedclothes. He was still there when the attendant brought my tea in the morning. He stared at Mij, and said, "Was it tea for one, or two, sir?"

DURING HIS STAY at Monreith, Mij's character began to establish itself. In the big loch by the house, and then in the sea, he demonstrated

not only his astonishing swimming powers but his willingness to reject freedom in favour of human company. He wore a harness to which a lead could be attached in emergency, but its function was as much to proclaim his domesticity to would-be human aggressors as one of restraint.

This time of getting to know a wild animal on terms of mutual esteem was wholly fascinating to me, and our long daily walks were a source of perpetual delight.

It remained difficult to lure him from some enticing piece of open water, but he was otherwise no more trouble than a dog, and infinitely more interesting to watch. His hunting powers were still undeveloped, but in the streams he would sometimes catch frogs, which he skinned with a dexterity seemingly born of long practice. I had rightly guessed that his early life in an Arab household would have produced an enlightened attitude towards poultry—for no Arab would tolerate a predator among his scrawny chickens—and in fact I found that Mij would follow me through a crowded and cackling farmyard without a glance to right or left.

Even in the open countryside he retained his passion for playthings, and would carry with him for miles some object that had caught his fancy: a fallen rhododendron blossom, an empty cartridge case, or, on one occasion, a woman's comb set with an artificial brilliant. This he found at the side of the drive as we set off one day, and carried it for three hours, laying it down on the bank when he took to water and returning for it as soon as he emerged.

Following daily the routes for which Mij expressed preference, I found myself led into the world in which the otters of my own countryside lived, a watery world of deep-cut streams between high, rooty banks; of unguessed alleys and tunnels in reed beds by a loch's edge; of islands tangled with fallen trees among whose roots were earthy excavations and a whisper of the wind in the willows. Now that I had become conscious of otters, I saw all round me the signs of their presence: a smoothed bank of steep mud which they had used for tobogganing; a hollowed-out tree stump formed into a dry sleeping place. Yet in none of these traces did Mij take the slightest interest, perhaps because he did not recognize in them the product of his own kind.



At the author's family home, Monreith

During all the time that I had him he killed, so far as I know, only one warm-blooded animal, and then he did not eat it. On this occasion he was swimming in a reedy loch when he caught a moor-hen a few days old, a little black gollywog of a creature half the size of a day-old chick. He had a habit of tucking his treasures under one arm when swimming—for an otter swimming underwater uses its forelimbs very little—and here he placed the chick while he went on. It must have drowned during the first minute or so, and when at length he brought it ashore he appeared disappointed by this unwarranted fragility; he nuzzled it and chittered at it in a pettish sort of way, then finally left it where it lay and went in search of something more co-operative.

WE ARRIVED at Camusfeàrna in early June, soon after the beginning of a long spell of Mediterranean weather that seemed to go on and on through timeless hours of sunshine and stillness. When I think of early summer at Camusfeàrna a single enduring image comes through the multitude that jostle before my mind's eye—that of wild roses against a clear blue sea. They are a deep, intense pink that is almost a red, and one sees them at Camusfeàrna against the direct background of the ocean, free from the green stain of summer.

Into this bright, watery landscape Mij moved and took possession with delight; he seemed so absolute a part of his surroundings that I wondered how they could ever have seemed to me complete before his arrival. At the beginning, while I was still cautious, his daily life followed something of a routine; but, as the weeks went on, this relaxed into total freedom, at the centre point of which the house remained Mij's holt, the den to which he returned when he was tired. He would wake with bizarre punctuality at exactly twenty past eight in the morning, come up to the pillow and nuzzle my face and neck with small squeaks of pleasure and affection. If I did not rouse myself very soon he would set about getting me out of bed with the slightly impatient efficiency of a nurse dealing with a difficult child. He began by going under the bedclothes and moving rapidly round the bed with a high-hunching, caterpillar-like motion that gradually untucked the bedclothes from beneath the mattress. When everything had been loosened up to his satisfaction he would flow off the bed on to the floor—except when running on dry land the only appropriate word for an otter's movement is flowing; they pour themselves, as it were, in the direction of their objective—take the bedclothes between his teeth, and, with a series of violent tugs, yank them down beside him.

Eventually I would be left uncovered on the undersheet, clutching the pillows rebelliously. But they, too, had to go; and it was here that he demonstrated the extraordinary strength concealed in his small body. He would work his way under them and execute a series of mighty hunches of his arched back, each of them lifting my head and shoulders clear of the bed, and at some point in the procedure he invariably contrived to dislodge the pillows while I was still in mid-air, much as a practical joker will remove a chair upon which someone is in the act of sitting down. Then I had to dress, while Mij looked on with an all-that-shouldn't-really-have-been-necessary-you-know sort of expression.

Mij's next objective was the eel box, which I kept in the burn. Having breakfasted, he would tour the three-quarter circle formed by the burn and the sea; shooting like an under-water arrow after trout where the burn runs deep between the trees; tobogganing down the sand slope; diving through the waves on the beach and catching dabs; then, lured in with difficulty from starting on a second lap, home to ecstatic squirming among his towels. This preamble to the day, when Mij had a full

stomach and I had not, became longer and longer, and after the first fortnight I took, not without misgivings, to going back indoors myself as soon as he had been fed. At first he would return after an hour or so, and when he had dried himself he would creep up under the loose cover of the sofa and form a hump at the centre of the seat. But as time went on he stayed longer about the burn, and I would not begin to worry until he had been gone for half the day.

There were quantities of black cattle at Camusfeàrna that year, and Mij seemed to detect in them an affinity to the water buffaloes of his native marshes, for he would dance round them with excited chitterings until they stampeded. Thus massed they were too formidable for him, so he finally devised a means of cattle baiting at which he became a master. With extreme stealth he would advance flat on his belly towards the rear end of some heifer whose black-tufted tail hung invitingly within his reach; then, as one who makes an impatient tug at a bell-rope, he would grab the tuft between his teeth and give one tremendous jerk upon it, leaping backward exactly in time to dodge the lashing hoofs. At first I viewed this sport with the gravest alarm, but Mij was able to gauge the distance to an inch, and never a hoof so much as grazed him. As a useful by-product of his impish sense of humour, the cattle tended to keep farther from the house, thus reducing the Augean litter of dung at my door.

I was writing a book that summer, and often I would lie sunbathing and writing by the waterfall while Mij quartered the stream's bed. Every now and again, with delighted squeaks, he would bound up the bank to deposit a skinload of water upon me and my manuscripts, sometimes adding insult to injury by confiscating my pen as he departed.

There is a patron saint of otters, St. Cuthbert, and there exists an eye-witness account of his converse with them, when he was staying at the abbey of Coldingham on a cliff above the sea.

"At night," we are told, "while other men took their rest, he would go out to pray. One night, a Brother of the monastery stealthily followed on his track and saw that he went down to the sea and, wading into the depths till the waves swelled up to his neck and arms, kept his vigil with chanting voiced like the sea. As dawn drew near, he waded back up the beach and, kneeling there, again began to pray; and, as he prayed, straight from the depths of the sea came two four-footed beasts which

are called by the common people otters. These began to busy themselves warming his feet with pantings, and trying to dry them with their fur; and when this good office was rendered, and they had his benediction, they slipped back again beneath their native waters."

It is apparent to me that forbearance was among St. Cuthbert's saintly virtues, for I know all about being dried by otters. Like everything else about them, it takes place the wrong way round. When one plays ball with a puppy, one throws the ball and the puppy fetches it back; it is all comparatively restful and orderly. But when one plays ball with an otter it is the otter who throws the ball, and the human who fetches it. In the same upside-down way, an otter emerges tempestuously from the water carrying about half a gallon of it in his fur, and sets about drying you with a positively terrifying zeal. Every inch of you requires, in the view of a conscientious otter, careful attention. The otter uses its back as the principal towel, and lies upon it while executing a series of vigorous, eel-like wriggles. In a surprisingly short space of time the otter is quite dry except for the last four inches of its tail, and the human being is soaking wet except for nothing. I have little doubt that St. Cuthbert had really been praying at the water's edge, not, as the good Brother thought in the poor light, up to his neck in the waves; it was the condition of the saint's clothing after he had been dried by the otters that led the observer to deduce some kind of submarine devotion. Clearly, too, it was an absolution rather than a simple benediction that the shivering and bedraggled saint bestowed upon his tormentors.

While otters have a special vocation for drying human beings they will also dry other objects, particularly beds. A bed dried this way is unusable for a week, and an otter-dried sofa is tolerable only in the heat of summer. At Camusfeàrna I have found no satisfactory solution to this beyond keeping the bedroom door closed, and turning a blind posterior to wet sofas and chairs.

IN THE sea, Mij discovered his true, breath-taking aquabatic powers. He would swim beside me as I rowed in the dinghy, and in the glass-clear waters of Camusfeàrna bay, where the white shell sand alternates with sea tangle and outcrops of rock, I could watch him as he dived down, down, down, fathom after fathom, to explore the gaudy sea forests with their flowered shell glades and mysterious, shadowed

caverns. He was able, as are all otters and seals, to walk on the bottom without buoyancy, for an otter swims habitually underwater and does not dive with full lungs, depending for oxygen, one presumes, upon a special adaptation of the venous system. I once timed Mij below the surface at almost six minutes, and I had the impression that he was in no way taxing his powers. Normally he would return to the surface every minute or so, breaking it only for a second, with a forward diving roll like that of a porpoise. Swimming at the surface, he was neither very fast nor graceful, a labouring dog-paddle in amazing contrast to his smooth darting grace below. For hours he would keep pace with the boat, appearing now on this side, now on that, sometimes michievously seizing an oar with both arms and dragging on it, and from time to time bouncing inboard with a flurry of water, momentarily recalled to his mission of drying people.

Mij caught a number of fish on his daily outings; and as his skill and speed grew, their size and variety increased. In the burn he learned to feel under stones for eels, reaching in with one paw and averted head; and I in turn learned to turn over the larger stones for him, so that after a time he would stand in front of some boulder too heavy for him to move, and chitter at me to come and lift it for him. Often, as I did this, an eel would streak out from it into deeper water and he would fire himself after it like a brown torpedo beneath the surface.

Near the edge of the tide he would search out the perfectly camouflaged flounders until they shot off with a wake of rising sand grains like smoke from an express train; and farther out in the bay he would kill an occasional sea trout; these he ate treading water as he did so, while I thought wistfully of the Chinese who employ trained otters to fish for them. Mij, I thought, with all his camaraderie, would never offer me a fish; I was wrong. One day he emerged from the sea on to the rock ledge where I was standing and slapped down in front of me a flounder a foot across. I took it that he had brought this for congratulation, for he would often bring his choicer catches for inspection before consuming them, so I said something encouraging and began to walk on. He hurried after me, slammed it down again with a wet smack at my feet, and sat there looking up and chittering at me.

I was in no hurry to take the gesture at its face value, having once before, to my cost, deprived Mij of his prey; but when he redoubled his

invitation, I reached down cautiously for the fish. Mij watched me with approval while I picked it up and began a mime of eating it; then he plunged off the rock into the sea.

Watching Mij in the rough equinoctial seas, I was at first sick with apprehension, then awed and fascinated, for his powers seemed little less than miraculous. During the first gale we had, I tried to keep him to rock pools and sheltered corners, but one day his pursuit of some prey took him to the seaward side of a high reef at the very tide's edge. As the long undertow sucked outward he was in no more than an inch or two of marbled water with the rock at his back, crunching the small fish he had caught; then, some forty yards to seaward of him I saw a great snarling comber piling up higher and higher, surging in fifteen feet tall and as yet unbreaking. I yelled to Mij as the wave towered darkly towards him, but he paid no heed to me. It curled over and broke just before it reached him; all those tons of water just smashed down and obliterated him, enveloping the whole rock behind in a booming tumult of sea. Somewhere under it I visualized Mij's smashed body swirling round the foot of the black rock. But as the sea drew back in a long hissing undertow I saw, incredulously, that nothing had changed; there was Mij still lying in the shallow marbled water, still eating his fish.

He rejoiced in the waves; he would hurl himself straight as an arrow right into the great roaring grey wall of an oncoming breaker and go clean through it as if it had neither weight nor momentum; he would swim far out to sea through wave after wave until the black dot of his head was lost among the distant white manes, and more than once I thought that some wild urge to seek new lands had seized him and that he would go on swimming west into the Sea of the Hebrides and that I would not see him again.

As the weeks went by his absences did grow longer, and I spent many anxious hours searching for him. When I had drawn blank at the falls and at all his favourite pools in the burn or among the rock ledges by the sea, I would begin to worry and to roam more widely, calling his name. His answering note of recognition was so like the call of a bird that inhabits the trees by the waterside that my heart would leap a hundred times before I was certain I had heard him, and then my relief was so unbounded that I would allow him to dry me without protest.

The first time that I found him in distress was in a strange, beautiful,

but inhospitable world of the dark gorge above the waterfall. Here, in summer, when the water is low, one may pick one's way precariously along the rocks at the stream's edge, the almost sheer but wooded sides rising a hundred feet at either hand. It is always twilight; the sunlight comes down thin and diffused by a stipple of oak and birch leaves far overhead. Here and there a fallen tree trunk spans the cool, moist gorge, its surface worn smooth by the wildcats' feet. There are foxes' and badgers' and wildcats' dens in the treacherous, near-vertical walls of the ravine; and the buzzards and hooded crows nest every year in the branches that lean out over the dark water.

I have never been at ease in this gorge, but it became Mij's special haunt, and one from which it was almost impossible to extract him, for the clamour of the water almost drowned the calling human voice. On this occasion there was more water in the burn than is usual in summer, and I was wet to the waist after the first few yards of the burn's bed. I called and called, but my voice was lost, and the mocking little birds answered me with Mij's own note of greeting. At length one of these birds called so insistently as to germinate in me a seed of doubt, but the sound came from far above me, and I had been looking for Mij in the burn. Then I saw him, high up on the cliff, occupying so small a ledge that he could not even turn to make his way back, and with a fifty-foot drop below him; he was looking at me and yelling his head off.

I had to make a long detour to get above him with a rope, and then I found that the trees at the cliff top were all rotten. The stump I made the rope fast to grew in soft peat and gave out an ominous squelching sound when I tugged on it. I went down that rock with the rope knotted round my waist and the feeling that Mij would probably survive somehow, but that I should most certainly die.

He tried to stand on his hind legs when he saw me coming down above him, and more than once I thought he had gone. I had put the loop of his lead through the rope at my waist, and I clipped the other end to his harness as soon as my arm could reach him, but the harnesses, with their constant immersion, never lasted long, and I trusted this one about as much as I trusted the stump to which my rope was tied. I went up the rope with Mij dangling and bumping at my side like a cow being loaded on to a ship by crane, and in my mind's eye were two jostling, urgent images—the slow, sucking emergence of the tree roots

which held me, and the gradual parting of the rivets that held Mij's harness together. It was one of the nastiest five minutes of my life; and when I reached the top the roots of the stump were indeed showing—it took just one tug with all my strength to pull them clean out.

Another time of anxiety and search stands out in my mind, for it was the first time Mij was away for a whole night. I had left him in the early morning eating his eels by the burn, and began to be uneasy when he had not returned by mid-afternoon. I had been working hard at my book; time had passed unheeded, and it was a shock to realize that I had been writing for some six hours. I went out and called for Mij down the burn and along the beach, then went again to the ravine above the falls. But there was no trace of him anywhere.

I left the burn and went out to the nearer islands; it was low tide, and on the sand I found otter footprints leading towards the lighthouse island; but I could not be certain that they were Mij's. All that evening I searched and called, and when dusk came and he still did not return I began to despair, for by sundown he was always asleep in front of the fire. By eleven o'clock it was blowing strong to gale from the south, and a heavy sea began to pile up; enough, I thought, for him to lose his bearings if he were trying to make his way homeward. I put a light in each window, left the doors open, and dozed fitfully in front of the fire. With the first faint paling of dawn, I went out to get the boat, for by now I had somehow convinced myself that Mij was on the lighthouse island. My little cockleshell was in difficulties from the moment I launched her; I had a beam sea to cross before I could reach the lee of the islands, and she was taking a slosh of water all the way.

After half an hour I was both wet and scared. The bigger islands gave some shelter from the wind, but in the passages between them the sea was foaming white and wicked-looking over the many rocks and reefs; if I took a moment to bail I would have been swept on to those black teeth. To complete my discomfort, I met a killer whale. He broke the surface no more than twenty yards to the north of me, a big bull whose sabre fin seemed to tower a man's height out of the water; and, probably by chance, he turned straight for me. I swung and rowed for the nearest island as though man were a killer's only prey. A hundred yards from this island I grounded on a reef, and slithered and floundered in thigh-deep water until I had lifted the flat keel clear; the killer, possibly

intent upon his own business and with no thought for me, cruised round a stone's throw away while I struggled to the shore.

The lighthouse island, when I eventually reached it, was a jungle of summer briers, which grip the clothing with octopus arms; on it I felt like a dream walker who never moves, and my calling voice was swept away northward on gusts of cold, wet wind. I got back to the house at nine in the morning, with a dead-weight boat more than half-full of water and a sick emptiness in mind and body. By now part of me was sure that Mij too had met the killer, and that he was at this moment half-digested in the whale's belly.

All that day I wandered and called, and at about five in the evening I began to remove the remaining evidence of Mij's past existence. I had taken from beneath the kitchen table his drinking bowl, and carried it to the scullery, when I thought I heard his voice behind me. The impression was strong enough for me to set down the bowl and hurry back into the kitchen. There on the kitchen floor was a large, wet footprint. I thought, I am tired and overwrought; and I went down on my hands and knees to inspect it. It was certainly wet, and it smelt of otter. I was still on all fours when from the doorway behind me I heard an unmistakable "Hah?" Then Mij was all over me. I had been reassuring myself and him for some minutes before I realized that his harness was burst apart, and that for a day or more he must have been caught, like Absalom, struggling, desperate, waiting for a rescue that never came.

I am aware that this scene of reunion, and the hours that for me had preceded it, must appear to many a reader little short of nauseous. There is, however, an obligation of honesty upon a writer. I knew by that time that Mij meant more to me than most human beings of my acquaintance, and I was not ashamed of it. Perhaps I knew that Mij trusted me more utterly than did any of my own kind, and so supplied a need that we are slow to admit.

WHEN I MISSED Mij I would go first to the waterfall, for there he would spend long hours alone, chasing the one big trout that lived in the pool below the falls, catching eels, or playing with some floating object that had been washed down. Sometimes he would set out from the house carrying a ping-pong ball, purposeful and self-engrossed, and he would still be at the waterfall with it an hour later, pulling it under

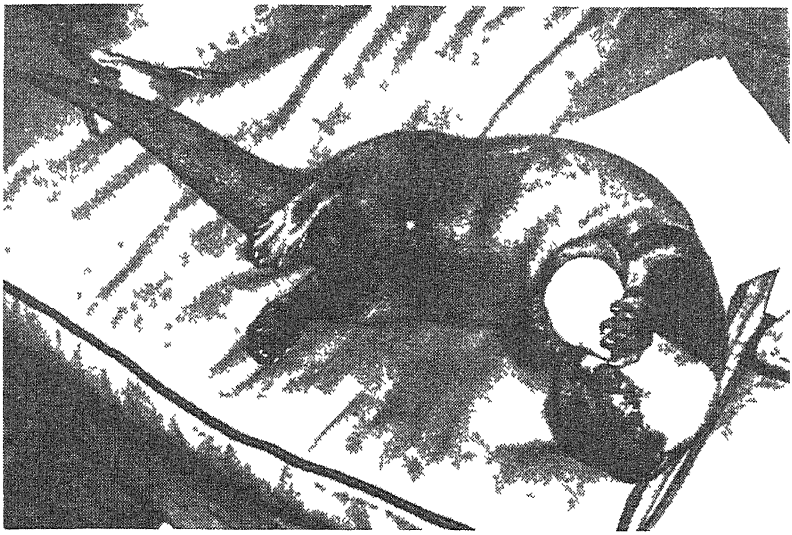
water and letting it shoot up again, rearing up and pouncing on it, playing his own form of water polo Once, I remember, I went to look for him there and at first could not find him, then my attention was caught by something red in the black water at the edge of the foam, and I saw that Mij was floating on his back, apparently fast asleep, with a bunch of scarlet rowan berries clasped to his chest with one arm

One day by a path that runs between the waterfall and the house, I saw a figure approaching me whom I recognized as the literary editor of the *New Statesman* I exchanged greetings with her over the wall, and as we began to talk Mij climbed on to the wall beside me and watched

Now Mij had a vice that I have not yet mentioned, a vice that I had been unable to cure, partly because I did not understand its motivation To put it bluntly he bit the lobes of people's ears—not in anger, but simply because he liked doing so He just nipped through them like an efficient ear piercer, and apparently felt the better for it I had had both ears pierced early in my association with Mij, but it was now so long since he had met strangers that I had forgotten his deplorable proclivity My visitor leaned an arm on the wall as she talked, with her head a mere foot from Mij's, and Mij reached out, without comment, and pierced the lobe of her left ear with surgical precision It was her finest hour I had seen many lobes pierced by Mij, I was a connoisseur of reaction to the situation, ranging from the faint shriek to the ominous silence, I thought I knew them all, but I was wrong Not by the smallest interruption in her speech did she betray that she had perceived the incident, only her eyes, as she continued her sentence, assumed an expression of unbelieving outrage entirely at variance with her words

I RETURNED to London with Mij in the autumn, and with his usual good humour he adjusted himself quickly In the station hotel he lay beside my chair while I had tea, and when a waitress brought him a saucer of milk he lapped it as delicately as any drawing room cat He entered his first class sleeper as one long used to travel, and at the flat next day seemed pleased to be among his old surroundings He settled quickly into his earlier routines, and even went shopping with me

One local shop devoted to oddities allowed him to make his own selection He had a passion for rubber toys, especially those that squeaked or rattled I was hesitating one day between a chocolate éclair



Rubber fruits that squeaked were among Mij s favourite toys

that whistled and an india rubber mackerel that wheezed when the assistant said, "Why not let him make his own choice, sir?" and placed both on the floor Mij plumped for the éclair, to the assistant's surprise, and thereafter Mij chose his own toys and himself bore them home in triumph It was a very realistic éclair, and as we passed the door of the pub on the corner a figure emerged swaying slightly, focused Mij, and stood riveted "Crikey!" he said quietly, and behind him a voice shouted, "You've got 'em again, Bill—you've got 'em again!"

In November I had to be away from London for three days, and this was Mij's first and only imprisonment away from people and surroundings that he knew I arranged for him to be boarded at the zoo sanatorium in Regent's Park, and took him there in a taxi Once inside the zoo he plodded sturdily ahead at the end of his lead, only when he passed the aviaries containing the great birds of prey did he cower and tug his lead the other way, a memory, perhaps of his native marshes where eagles must be the otter's only natural enemy I left him in a grim cage with only my sheepskin coat for company, and when the door

was closed on him his wails went to my heart. I could hear him long after I had closed the gate of the sanatorium yard.

The next day I telephoned from the north to inquire if he had settled down. Too much, I was told; in fact he had insulated himself in the same deep coma into which he had sunk in his box on the air journey. He had refused all food, and after digging at the iron and cement that enclosed him until his feet bled he had curled up in my coat and refused to be roused. I was advised to come back for him as soon as possible.

I rushed back to the zoo at once. I could not at first even see Mij in his cage. There were a lot of dead fish lying about untouched; the sheepskin jacket was huddled in the middle of them, and there was no movement anywhere. I went in through the steel-barred door and putting my hand into the jacket I felt him warm and breathing, as far into the armhole as he could push himself. Only when I touched his face did he begin to awaken, with a slow, dazed air as if he were emerging from a trance; then suddenly he was out and leaping in a frenzy of joy, clambering over me and inside my coat, and rushing round and round that barren cage until he threw himself down panting in front of me.

In those two days he had taken on the sour odour of stale urine and dejection and indignity that is the hallmark of the captive who has lost his self-respect; his usually sweet-smelling fur stank like an ill-kept ferret. I never repeated the experiment.

He paid one more visit to the zoo. I had long wanted to have a clear, eye-level view of his performance under water, and the zoo aquarium allowed me to set up a large glass tank I had hired for the day. I asked an artist, Michael Ayrton, to come and make drawings of Mij, and provided a number of goldfish for Mij to catch. He set about their destruction with a display of virtuosity for which even my hours of watching him from above had left me unprepared. As with his toys, he was not content to possess only one fish at a time; having captured one, he would tuck it under an arm and swoop, sometimes "looping the loop" as he did so, upon another; at one moment he had fish under both arms and a third in his mouth. His speed was bewildering, his grace breath-taking; he was mercurial, sinuous, wonderful. I thought of a ballet dancer, of a bird or an aircraft in aerobatics, but in these I was comparing him to lesser grandeurs; he was an otter in his own element, and he was the most beautiful thing in Nature that I had ever seen.

WHAT LITTLE there remains to tell of his story I shall write quickly, for anyone who in reading it has shared a little of my pleasure in his life must share, too, a little of my unhappiness at his death.

I had arranged to go to Camusfeàrna to spend the spring and summer in his company, and there to write a book about him. I was to leave London early in April, but I needed a fortnight's freedom from his incessant demands upon my time, and I arranged that he should precede me to Scotland in the charge of a friend. I packed his "suit-case," a wicker basket whose contents seemed ever to become more and more elaborate—spare harnesses, leads, cod-liver oil, toys partially disintegrated but long favoured; and I travelled with him in a hired car from my flat to Euston Station. It was a big Humber, with a broad ledge between the top of the back seat and the rear window; here, I recall with a vividness that is still painful, he sprawled upon his back and rolled my fountain pen to and fro between his forepaws, or held it clasped with one of them against his broad, glossy belly.

At the station he tugged purposefully at the lead all the way to the sleeper, where he made straight for the wash-basin and accommodated his plastic body to the curves. His left hand reached up and fumbled with the tap. That was the last I ever saw of him.

During the next ten days I received letters telling of Mij's delight in his renewed freedom, of fish he had caught; of how he would come in dog-tired and curl up before the fire; of anxious hours of absence; of how it had been decided he would be safer without his harness, which, despite the care that had gone into its design, might catch upon some under-water snag and drown him.

On April 16 I was packing to leave for Camusfeàrna when I received a telephone call from the estate agent of the property to which Camusfeàrna belonged. It was rumoured that an otter had been killed at a village north of Camusfeàrna; and Mij was missing. However, the otter that had been killed was said to have been so mangy and scabby that the killer had not thought it worthwhile to preserve the skin.

I arrived at the village the following afternoon. I had heard conflicting tales at the station, on the launch, at the village pier. Some said that a very old wild otter had been killed, but that Mij was already safely returned, others that he had been seen in a village south of Camusfeàrna. I did not believe them; I knew that Mij was dead, but I was driven by

a compulsive desire to know by whom and how he had been killed.

A roadman called Big Angus, I was told, had been driving his lorry past the church when he had seen an otter on the road where it bordered the sea, and had killed it. I waited in the village to see him. Big Angus came at last. Yes, he had killed an otter yesterday; but the skin was half-bald, and he had not kept it. He was soft-spoken and ingenuous.

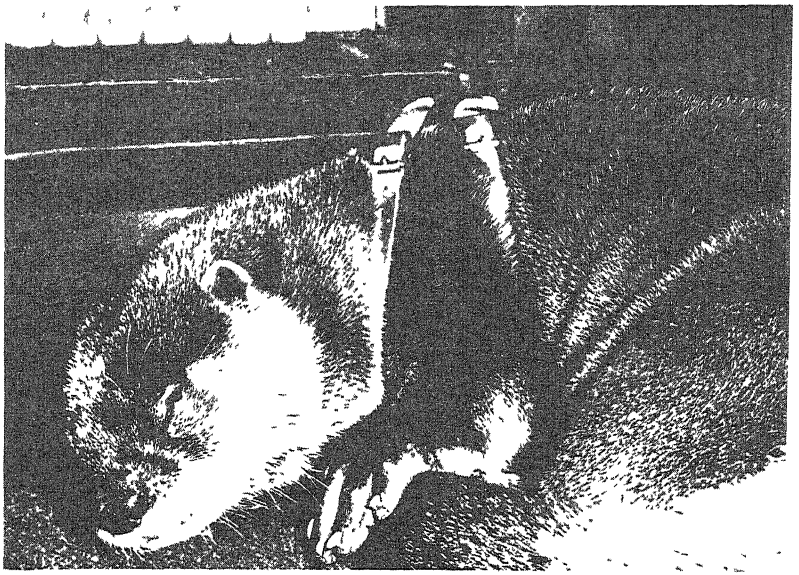
"How did you kill him?" I asked. "With a stick?" "No, sir," he said, "I had a pickhead in the back of the lorry." Yes, he thought that a wild otter would wait in the road while he went to fetch the instrument of its death. He stuck to his story. "I threw the carcass in the river," he said, "and I don't remember where." He had been well briefed and well rehearsed, as I learned later, for he had gone in a panic to seek advice. Brave murderer; for his lies and deceit I could have killed him then as instinctively as he had killed Mij. Instead, I pleaded with him to tell me; I tried to make him understand what it would be like for me to remain at Camusfeàrna waiting day after day for the return that I did not believe possible. He did not give way an inch.

I learned later, from someone else with more humanity. "I felt I couldn't sit by and see you deceived," he said. "It's just not a decent action in a man. I saw the body on the lorry when it stopped in the village, and there wasn't a hair out of place on the whole skin. If he didn't know before that it was yours, he knew then because I told him."

I got the story little by little. Mij had been wandering widely for some days past, though he had always returned at night. Earlier that day he had been recognized near the village where he was killed; a man who saw an otter in his hen run had fetched his gun before being struck by the otter's indifference to the chickens, and made the right deduction. Mij had been on his way home when he had met Big Angus, and he had never been taught to fear any human being. I hope he was killed quickly, but I wish he had had one chance to use his teeth on his killer.

He had been with me a year and a day.

I MISSED Mij desperately, so much that it was a year before I could bring myself to go to Camusfeàrna again. He had filled that landscape so completely, had made so much his own the ring of bright water I loved, that it seemed, after he had gone from it, hollow and insufficient. In London, I moved to Chelsea, partly because I found the elaboration



At rest before the fire

of otter-proofing devices in my old premises too constant a reminder of my failure to keep Mij alive.

It was early spring when I made up my mind to go back to Camusfeàrna. There, dimly at first, then clear and undisguised, came the thought that the place was incomplete without an otter, that Mij must have a successor; that, in fact, there must always be an otter at Camusfeàrna for as long as I occupied the house. Having made up my mind, I began a systematic examination of all the holts up and down the coast. One of the islands in the bay is called Otter Island, and on it is a tumbled cairn of boulders forming a system of low caves much used by otters; one year there had been a litter of cubs there, but now, though several of the inner chambers had been lined with fresh bedding, there was no sign of young. Nor was there in the other holts I visited.

Still, I did not despair of acquiring a cub locally, for otters have no breeding season, and cubs have been found in every month of the year; but as a second string I wrote to my Iraqi friend, Robert Angorly, to ask if he could get me another of Mij's species. The Marsh Arabs soon brought him a succession of cubs, three of which were *Lutrogale*

perspicillata maxwelli, but each died within a few days. The next cub lived, and I arranged for it to be flown to London on July 15. On July 14, revolution swept Iraq, and of my friend Angorly, who never took much interest in politics, there has been no word since.

In the autumn I made another attempt to acquire an otter, but by now with diminishing hope. A friend arranged to import two Indian otters through a London dealer; he was to keep one and I the other. They were described as young and tame, a male and female. They were due to arrive at London Airport at about one o'clock in the morning, and such was our anxiety for their welfare that we were there to meet them. There was, however, no trace of them, and, reflecting that they were safely consigned to a dealer to whom they represented hard cash, we returned to bed. Hours later we found them at the dealer's, the crate still unopened; the two occupants were feeble, shivering, soaked in their own excrement, almost too weak to stand. They died early next day, mine in the zoo hospital, my friend's in his wife's lap; she had sat up all night trying to coax the pathetic little creature back to life.

I returned to Camusfeàrna in the spring of 1959, and I had been there for no more than a week when there occurred the strangest episode in the saga of my efforts to replace Mijbil, a coincidence so extravagant that had it been unwitnessed I should hesitate to record it.

On April 19 I motored to the railhead village to meet a guest and had lunch in the large glossy hotel that caters for the transatlantic tourist trade. Now, in the spring, it was comparatively empty; and, falling into conversation with the hall porter, I found that we had many acquaintances in common. While I waited for the train we exchanged stories and memories.

I met my guest at the station, and we returned to the hotel for a drink before setting off for Camusfeàrna. We were sitting in the lounge when suddenly the hall porter came running over to us. "Mr. Maxwell!" he called. "Come quick and tell me what's this strange beast outside!"

I have an open mind on the subject of extra-sensory perception in general; I have had one or two curious experiences, but none quite as strange as the overwhelming and instant certainty that I felt then of what I was going to see outside the door.

Four people were walking past the hotel. At their heels lolloped a large, sleek otter, with a silvery-coloured head and a snow-white throat

and chest. I had a feeling of unreality, of struggling in a dream. I rushed up to the party, and began to jabber, probably quite incoherently, about Mijbil, and about my frustrated efforts to find a successor. I must have been talking a great deal, because what they were saying in reply took a long time to sink in, and when it did the sense of dreaming increased.

"Got her in West Africa . . . only eight weeks old . . . brought her up myself. In six weeks we've got to go back She can't travel. . . . Pitiful state when we got here from Lagos . . . so it looked like a zoo or nothing—everyone admires her, but when it comes to actually owning her, they shy off. . . . Poor Edal, it was breaking my heart. . . ."

We were sitting on the steps of the hotel by this time, and the otter was nuzzling at the nape of my neck—that well-remembered touch of hard whiskers and soft face fur.

By the time I had taken in what her owners were saying, the party had dwindled by two. It transpired that the only reason her owners had been in the village at all was to drop two hikers. And the only reason I was there was to meet my guest, and the only reason we had met at all was that two hours earlier I had made the acquaintance of the hall porter. If he had not called me they would have passed by the hotel and gone home, and I should have gone back to Camusfeàrna.

Ten days later Edal became mine, and there is once more an otter at Camusfeàrna, playing in the burn and sleeping before the hearth.





Photo R Doisneau–Rapho

Michelangelo Death Mask in the Louvre

THE AGONY AND THE ECSTASY

the biographical novel of
MICHELANGELO

A condensation of the book by
IRVING STONE

Illustrations by Giorgio De Gaspari
Chapter decorations by James Alexander

"The Agony and the Ecstasy" is published by Collins London

INTO THE strife and brilliance of fifteenth-century Florence was born one of the greatest geniuses the world has ever known. His name was Michelangelo Buonarroti.

His was a dazzling period—a time of revolutions, religious turbulence, artistic rivalries, intrigues in politics and love—and Michelangelo was at the centre of it all. A stubborn fighter for his ideals, a man seldom at peace with himself or others, he was a master not only of painting but of architecture, science and, above all, sculpture—one whose consuming love, overriding all other passions, was for stone and for what he could wrest from it.

In *The Agony and the Ecstasy*, a best-seller from the day of publication, Irving Stone illuminates the rich pageantry of a fascinating era and brings to life a complex but very human genius.

"A tremendous biographical novel."

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BOOK ONE
The Studio

HE SAT before the mirror of his second-floor bedroom, overlooking the Via dell' Anguillara in Florence, sketching his own lean cheeks with their high bone ridges, the flat broad forehead, the dark curling hair, the amber-coloured eyes wide-set but heavy-lidded.

"My head is out of proportion," thought the thirteen-year-old, "with my forehead overweighing my mouth and chin. Someone should have used a plumb line."

He shifted his wiry body lightly so as not to waken his four brothers. With rapid strokes of the crayon he began redraughting his features, broadening the cheeks, making the lips fuller. "It's too bad a face can't be redrawn before it's delivered to the client," he thought.

Notes of a bird's song came fluting through the big window: that would be his friend Granacci. He hid his drawing paper under his bed and went noiselessly down the circular stairs to the street.

Francesco Granacci was a tall nineteen-year-old, with hay-coloured hair and alert blue eyes. For a

year he had been providing Michelangelo with drawing materials and prints borrowed surreptitiously from the studio of the painter Ghirlandaio, where he was apprenticed.

"You're really coming with me this time?" Granacci asked.

"It's my birthday present to myself."

"Good. And remember what I told you about Domenico Ghirlandaio. He likes his apprentices to be humble."

They crossed the Square of the Old Market, where fresh beeves hung on pulleys in front of the butchers' stalls. Michelangelo stopped to gaze at Donatello's St. Mark standing in a tall niche of the church Or San Michele. "Sculpture is the greatest art!" he exclaimed with emotion.

"Stop gaping," said Granacci, "there's business to be done."

Together they entered the Ghirlandaio studio. It was a large high-ceilinged room with a pungent smell of paint and charcoal. In the centre was a plank table round which half a dozen sleepy young apprentices crouched on stools. In a corner a man was grinding colours in a mortar, while along the walls were stacked plans and sketches for frescoes the Tornabuoni family had commissioned for the choir of the church of Santa Maria Novella. On a raised platform sat a man of about forty, his wide-topped desk the only ordered spot in the studio, with its neat rows of pens, brushes, sketch-books, its implements hanging on hooks.

Granacci stopped below his master's desk. "Signor Ghirlandaio, this is Michelangelo, about whom I told you."

Michelangelo felt himself being spitted by a pair of eyes reputed to be able to see more than those of any other artist in Italy. The boy too used his eyes, drawing in his mind the artist sitting above him, the sensitive face with its full lips, prominent cheekbones, long black hair, the long supple fingers.

"Who is your father?" demanded Ghirlandaio.

"Lodovico di Lionardo Buonarroti-Simoni."

"I have heard the name. How old are you?"

"Thirteen."

"We start at ten. Where have you been these three years?"

"Wasting my time at school, studying Latin and Greek."

A twitching at the corner of Ghirlandaio's lips showed that he liked the answer. "Can you draw?"

"I have the capacity to learn."

"He has a good hand. I've seen his drawings on the walls of his father's house," Granacci said.

"Ah, a muralist," quipped Ghirlandaio.

Michelangelo took Ghirlandaio seriously.

"I've never tried colour. It's not my trade."

"Whatever else you may lack, it isn't modesty. Very well, suppose you sketch for me. What will it be?"

Michelangelo's eyes travelled over the workshop, swallowing impressions the way country youths break bunches of grapes in their mouths at autumn wine festivals. "Why not the studio?"

Ghirlandaio gave a short laugh. "Granacci, give Buonarroti paper and charcoal."

Michelangelo sat down on a bench to sketch. His eye and hand were good working partners, and for the first time since entering the studio his breathing was normal. Soon he felt someone leaning over his shoulder. "I'm not finished," he said.

"It is enough." Ghirlandaio studied the paper. "Granacci was right. You have a strong fist."

Michelangelo held his hand in front of him.

"It is a stone-cutter's hand," he replied proudly.

"We do not use stone-cutters here. I'll start you as an apprentice, but you must pay me six florins for the first year."

"I can pay you nothing."

Ghirlandaio looked at him sharply. "The Buonarroti are not poor. Since your father wants you apprenticed. . . ."

"My father beats me every time I mention painting."

"Will he not beat you if you tell him I have accepted you?"

"My defence will be the fact that you will pay him six florins the first year, eight the second, and ten the third."

"But that's unheard of!"

"Otherwise I cannot come to work for you."

The apprentices made no pretence of working while they watched this scene. The boy stood his ground respectfully, gazing straight at Ghirlandaio as though to say: "I will be worth it to you." The artist felt a grudging admiration. He said, "Bring your father in."

At the door, Granacci threw an arm affectionately about the boy's shoulder. "You broke every rule. But you got in!"

WALKING PAST the stone house of the poet Dante and the church of the Badia was for Michelangelo like walking through a gallery: for the Tuscan treats stone with the tenderness that a lover reserves for his sweetheart. From the time of their Etruscan ancestors the people of this region had been quarrying stone from the mountains, hauling it by oxen to their land, cutting, edging, shaping and building it into houses and palaces, churches and loggias, forts and walls. From childhood the Tuscans knew the feel and smell of stone; for fifteen hundred years their ancestors had worked the native *pietra serena*—serene stone—building a city of such breath-taking beauty that every Florentine vowed: "Never shall I live out of sight of the Duomo!"—Florence's domed cathedral.

Arriving home, he went through the side entrance of the Buonarroti house into the family kitchen. Lucrezia, his stepmother, was making *torta*. The chickens had been fried in oil, ground into sausage with onions, parsley, eggs and saffron. Ham and pork had been made into ravioli with cheese, flour, clove and ginger, and laid with the chicken sausage between layers of dates and almonds. The dish was being covered with pastry before being placed in the hot embers to bake.

"Good morning, *madre mia.*"

"Ah, Michelangelo. I have something special for you today: a salad that sings in the mouth."

Each morning Lucrezia rose at four to reach the market just as the farmers arrived through the cobbled streets, their carts filled with fresh produce, eggs, cheese and meat. She selected only the very best figs, peaches, beans, peas; so Michelangelo and his four brothers called her *Il Migliore,* The Best. She was a docile creature—else why would so young a woman marry a forty-three-year-old widower with five sons, a brother and sister-in-law and a mother to cook for?—but in the kitchen she was a lioness in the tradition of Marzocco, Florence's heraldic lion. Michelangelo, in the bedroom next to his parents' room, often heard their pre-dawn debates while his stepmother dressed for marketing.

"Every day you want a bale of herrings, a thousand oranges."

"Lodovico, you are one who would keep money in the purse and hunger in the belly."

"Hunger! No Buonarroti has missed his dinner for three hundred years."

Now Michelangelo walked through the family-room with the oak bench facing the fire-place, the six-foot bellows propped against the stone, the wall chairs with leather backs and leather seats. The next room was his father's study; here Lodovico sat cramped over his parchment account books. For years his sole activity had been a concentration on how to retain the remnants of the Buonarroti fortune, which had shrunk to a ten-acre farm in Settignano and a house with a disputed title.

Lodovico heard his son come in and looked up. He sported a luxurious moustache which flowed into his beard, cut square four inches below his chin. His hair was streaked with grey; across the forehead were four deep lines; his brown eyes were melancholy. He was a cautious man who locked the door with three keys.

"Good morning, *messer padre.*"

Lodovico sighed. "I was born too late. One hundred years ago the Buonarroti vines were tied with sausages."

He knew to the last florin how much each Buonarroti generation had owned of land, houses, business, gold. The family records were the Old Testament of his life. "We are noble burghers," he would tell his sons. "Our family is as old as the Medici."

When the powerful pro-Church party, the Guelphs, rose to power in Florence, the Buonarroti family had also risen rapidly: Buonarroti had been mayors and members of the city council. The last official recognition of the family had taken place fourteen years before, in 1474, when Lodovico himself had been appointed *podesià,* or visiting mayor, for two hamlets high in the Apennines.

As he stood in the recessed window, letting the thin sun warm his shoulders, the boy's mind went back to their house in Settignano, overlooking the valley of the Arno, when his mother had been alive. Then there had been love and laughter; but when his mother died, his father retreated in despair into his study, while his Aunt Cassandra took over the care of the household. Michelangelo was lonely and unwanted except by his grandmother, Monna Alessandra, and the Topolinos—a stone-cutter's family across the valley. The stone-cutter's wife, Monna Margherita, had suckled him as a baby.

Even after his father had remarried and the family had moved to Florence, he fled at every opportunity to the Topolinos. In their yard

he would set to work cutting the *pietra serena* from the neighbouring quarry into bevelled building stones for a new Florentine palace, working out his unhappiness in the precision blows the stone-cutter and his sons had taught him.

Michelangelo pulled himself back from his memories. "Father, I have just come from Ghirlandaio's studio. He has agreed to take me on as an apprentice."

Lodovico rose to a commanding position over the boy. This inexplicable desire of his son to become an artisan could be the final push that would topple the Buonarroti into the social abyss.

"Michelangelo, I sent you to an expensive school so that you could do well in the Wool Guild and some day become a rich merchant. That was how most of the great Florentine fortunes started, even the Medici's. Do you think that I will let you waste your life as a painter, bring disgrace to the family name? For three hundred years no Buonarroti has fallen so low as to work with his hands."

"That is true. We have been usurers," the boy said.

"We belong to the Money Changers Guild, one of the most respectable in Florence. Money-lending is an honourable profession."

Michelangelo sought refuge in humour. "Have you seen Uncle Francesco grab his coins and fold up his counter outside Or San Michele when it starts to rain? No one ever worked faster with his hands."

At the mention of his name Uncle Francesco came running into the room. He said in a hoarse voice: "Michelangelo, what perverse pleasure can you derive from injuring the Buonarroti?"

The boy was furious. "I have as much pride in our name as anyone. Why can't I learn to do work that all Florence will be proud of, as they are of Donatello's sculptures and Ghirlandaio's frescoes?"

Lodovico put his hand on the boy's shoulder, calling him "Michelagnolo," his pet name. This was his favourite of the five sons, the one for whom he had the highest hopes. "Michelagnolo, Donatello began as an artisan and ended as an artisan. So will Ghirlandaio."

"Art is like washing an ass's head with lye," observed Francesco, for the Tuscan's wisdom is a web of proverbs; "you lose both the effort and the lye."

"Bleed me of art, and there won't be enough liquid left in me to spit," cried Michelangelo.



"I'll teach you to be vulgar," Lodovico shouted.

He started raining blows on the boy. Michelangelo lowered his head like a beast in a storm, murmuring his grandmother's proverb: "*Pazienza!* No man is born into the world whose work is not born with him."

From the corner of his eye he saw his enormously fat Aunt Cassandra in the doorway, heard her booming voice join in. Then, suddenly, all words and blows stopped, for his grandmother had entered the room. She was a retiring woman who exercised her matriarchy only in moments of family crisis. Lodovico slumped into his chair. "Never let me hear again about being apprenticed to artists," he said.

Monna Alessandra said to her son. "What difference does it make

whether he joins the Wool Guild and twists wool or the Apothecaries and mixes paints? You won't leave enough money to set up five geese, let alone sons. All five must look to their living; let Michelangelo go into a studio as he wishes."

"I intend to be apprenticed to Ghirlandaio, Father. You must sign the papers. I'll do well by us all."

"We have not a scudo to pay for any apprenticeship."

Michelangelo said gently: "There is no need for money, *padre*. Ghirlandaio has agreed to pay *you* for my apprenticeship. He thinks I have a strong fist."

Lodovico crossed himself. He said: "Truly I have conquered myself in more battles than a saint!"

GHIRLANDAIO had the most bustling, successful studio in Italy. He and his brothers, also painters, had been trained by their father, an expert goldsmith who was known for a wreath called a *ghirlanda*, which fashionable Florentine women wore in their hair.

Michelangelo found the studio teeming with activity but good-natured. Mainardi, who was in charge of the apprentices, took him in tow. "The purpose of painting," he explained, "is to be decorative, to bring stories to life, to make people happy; yes, even with pictures of the saints being martyred. Remember that, Michelangelo, and you will become a successful painter."

There was no formal method of teaching at Ghirlandaio's studio. Its philosophy was expressed in a plaque nailed to the wall:

The most perfect guide is Nature. Continue without fail to draw something every day.

Michelangelo had to learn from whatever task each man had at hand. Ghirlandaio created the over-all design of the frescoes for the Tornabuoni choir. He also did the more conspicuous panels and those containing important portraits. Major portions of the other panels were painted by Mainardi, Benedetto, Granacci and Bugiardini, the most experienced apprentices; the youngest ones practised on the lunettes, which were hard to see.

Two weeks flew by and the magic day of Michelangelo's contract signing and first pay dawned. He felt he had done little to earn his two

gold florins: picking up paints at the chemist's, screening sand and washing it in a barrel with a running hose.

Awakening while it was still dark, he climbed over his young brother Buonarroto, dressed and went to the workshop. Ghirlandaio's good morning was short. He had been working on a study of St. John Baptizing the Neophyte and was upset because he could not clarify his concept of Jesus. Michelangelo watched with apprehension: would he forget what day it was? When the others came in, Granacci saw his friend's expression. He went to Ghirlandaio's brother, David, who was paymaster, and murmured in his ear. David reached into the leather purse hooked on to his belt and handed Michelangelo two florins and a contract book. Michelangelo signed his name beside the first payment, then wrote the date: *Aprile 16, 1488*. Joy raced through him as he anticipated the moment when he would hand the florins to his father. Then he was aware of an enthusiastic hubbub among the apprentices and the voice of Jacopo, imp son of a baker:

"It's agreed; we draw from memory that gnome figure on the alley wall behind the *bottega*. The one who draws the most accurate reproduction wins and pays for dinner. Cieco, Baldinelli, Granacci, Bugiardini, Tedesco, are you ready?"

Michelangelo felt a dull pain in his chest; he was being left out again. His had been a lonely childhood; he had had no intimate friend except Granacci. Often he had been excluded from games. Why? Because he had been small and sickly? Because there was not enough laughter in him? He desperately wanted to be included in this young group.

Jacopo was calling out: "Time limit—ten minutes."

"Why can't I compete, Jacopo?" Michelangelo cried.

Jacopo scowled. "You couldn't possibly win, so there would be no chance of your paying."

"Please let me try, too. You'll see; I won't do too badly."

"All right," Jacopo agreed finally. "Now, everyone ready?"

Excitedly, Michelangelo picked up charcoal and paper and began outlining the gnarled figure he had seen on the alley wall.

"Time limit!" cried Jacopo. "Line up your drawings on the table."

Michelangelo put his in line and Jacopo stared at it astonished. "I can't believe it. Look! Michelangelo has won!"

There were cries of congratulation. He glowed with pride. He was

the newest apprentice, yet he had won the right to buy everyone dinner. . . . *Buy everyone dinner!* His heart sank. There were seven of them. . . . Two litres of wine, soup, veal, fruit! A sizeable hole in one of his gold pieces.

On the way to an inn, with the others rushing ahead laughing among themselves, something bothered him. He fell into step beside Granacci. "I was gulled, wasn't I?"

"Yes. It's part of the initiation. If you had known, would you have made yourself draw badly?"

Michelangelo grinned sheepishly. "They couldn't lose!"

THE NEXT day he watched Ghirlandaio complete an oil portrait of Giovanna Tornabuoni, painted as a separate commission. "Oil painting is for women," Ghirlandaio said sarcastically. "But I can use this figure in the fresco. Never try to invent human beings, Michelangelo; paint only those whom you have drawn from life."

It seemed to Michelangelo that the skilled apprentice Benedetto, who never worked freehand, paid more attention to the mathematical squares on the paper before him than to the character of the person portrayed. He told Michelangelo: "The face is divided into three parts: first, hair and forehead; then the nose; then the chin and mouth. Now take the proportions of a man—I omit women because not one of them is perfectly proportioned. The arm with the hand extends to the middle of the thigh. The length of a man is eight faces; it is equal to his width with the arms extended."

Michelangelo tried drawing to this geometric plan, but the restriction was a coffin into which he could squeeze only dead bodies.

From Jacopo he received not technical instruction but news of the city. Nothing nefarious was hidden from Jacopo. Daily, he made the rounds of the inns, the wine- and barbers'-shops, the quarters of prostitutes, the groups of old men sitting on stone benches before the palaces, for they were the best purveyors of scandal.

Ghirlandaio had a copy of Cennini's treatise on painting; although Jacopo could not read a word, he was pretending to read passages he had memorized: *"As an artist your life should always be regulated as if you were studying theology, philosophy, or any other science, eating and drinking temperately to save your hand. One thing will render your*

hand so unsteady that it will tremble and flutter more than leaves shaken by the wind, and this is frequenting too much the company of women." Jacopo threw back his head and laughed. "Now you know why I don't paint more: I don't want the Ghirlandaio frescoes to tremble and flutter like leaves in the wind!"

One night, Michelangelo and Granacci walked through the Piazza della Signoria, the square before the Signoria where the city council met. A large crowd was gathered. On the balcony of the palace an ambassador from the Turkish sultan, garbed in a turban and flowing robes, was presenting a giraffe to the council. Michelangelo wished he could sketch the scene. He complained to Granacci that he felt like a chess-board, with alternating black and white squares of information and ignorance.

Next day he returned to the studio early. He had decided that he must study the drawings of his master. Under Ghirlandaio's desk he found a bundle labelled "Slaughter of the Innocents," took it to the table and spread out the studies for the fresco. They had simplicity and authority. He began copying them and had made half a dozen sketches when he heard Ghirlandaio behind him: "Who gave you permission to pry into that bundle?"

Michelangelo put down his charcoal, frightened.

"I want to learn. The quicker I learn, the more I can help."

The intensity in the boy's eyes banished Ghirlandaio's anger. He took Michelangelo to his desk, handed him a blunt-nibbed pen and picked up another for himself. "Here's how I use a pen: circles for the eyes, angular tips for a nose, like this; a short nib to render a mouth and score the underlip." Michelangelo followed the older man with quick movements of the hand. With a few rapid strokes Ghirlandaio could achieve a lyrical flow of body lines and at the same time give the figures individuality. A look of rapture came over Michelangelo's face. He asked if they might sometimes draw from nude models.

"Why should you learn to draw the nude when we must always paint the figure draped?" demanded Ghirlandaio. "No one has worked in nudes since the pagan Greeks. We have to paint for Christians. Besides, human bodies are ugly. Painting should be charming, refreshing. I like to draw figures walking delicately under their gowns. . . ."

"And I would like to draw them the way God made Adam."

GHIRLANDAIO's panel of the Birth of St. John was finally ready to be transferred to Santa Maria Novella. Everyone bustled about, collecting charts, sketches, brushes and other equipment. All was loaded on a small cart behind an even smaller donkey, and off went the entire studio with Ghirlandaio at its head and Michelangelo driving the cart.

He pulled the donkey up in front of the church, entered the bronze doors and stood breathing the cool, incense-heavy air. The church stretched before him, more than three hundred feet long; he walked slowly up the main aisle, savouring every step. It was like a journey through Italian art: Giotto, Masaccio, Brunelleschi, Ghiberti; and then the magnificent Rucellai chapel, built by his own mother's family two centuries before.

He had never gone into the chapel, for he was not allowed even to mention the Rucellai name at home: after his mother's death the Rucellai had cut off all communication, not caring what happened to her sons. But now he was going to work in Santa Maria Novella; had he not earned the right to enter the chapel?

He walked up the stairs, slowly. Once inside the chapel with its Cimabue Madonna, he fell to his knees; this was the chapel where his mother and his mother's mother had worshipped. Tears flooded his eyes. Prayers sprang to his lips unbidden. Was he praying to the Madonna or to his mother?

He rose and left the chapel, thinking of the contrast between his two families. The Rucellai had built this chapel at the same time that the Buonarroti had come into their wealth. But the Buonarroti had never commissioned a chapel. They had always been hard men with a florin, willing to invest only in houses and land. Michelangelo had never seen a painting or sculpture in a Buonarroti house, though they had lived for three hundred years in the most creative city in the world, where even modest homes had religious works that had come down through the generations. The Buonarroti were not only stingy, they were enemies of art; they despised the men who created it.

A shout from Bugiardini on the scaffolding called him. Bugiardini was plastering the area to be painted that day, and Ghirlandaio had already outlined some figures. Michelangelo watched as he mixed mineral earth colours in little jars of water, and commenced painting. He had to work swiftly before the plaster dried; if he had failed to

gauge accurately how much he could do that day, the remaining dry plaster would have to be cut away the following morning, leaving a seam. Michelangelo sprinkled the area with water just ahead of Ghirlandaio's flying brush.

The climax of the panel was reached when Ghirlandaio painted the exquisite young Giovanna Tornabuoni, robed in rich silks and jewels, gazing straight ahead and not in the least interested in Elisabeth in her high-backed bed, or John, suckling at the breast of another Tornabuoni beauty. Two old Tornabuoni aunts appeared as visitors to Elisabeth.

When the plaster began to dry, the burnt lime recovered its carbonic acid from the air, fixing the colours. The pigments remained on the surface of the plaster in a crystalline coating of carbonate of lime. The panel now had a metallic lustre which would protect the colours from heat, cold or moisture. The amazing fact was that each day's segment was drying slowly to the very colours Ghirlandaio had created in his studio.

Standing before the brilliant panel, the boy realized that this was not the birth of John to the modest family of Elisabeth and Zacharias; it was a social gathering in the home of a merchant prince, devoid of religious spirit. Florence was Ghirlandaio's religion. He spent his life painting its people, its palaces, its streets and pageants. And what an eye he had! Nothing escaped him. Since no one would commission him to paint Florence he had made Florence Jerusalem, and all the Biblical people modern Florentines. Michelangelo walked out of the church feeling depressed. The forms were superb; but where was the substance? He too wanted to learn to set down what he saw; but what he felt about what he saw would always be more important.

HE DRIFTED over to the Duomo, where the apprentices with other young men of the city gathered on the cool marble steps to view the passing pageant. Every day in Florence was a fair. The girls were fair-haired, slender, erect; they wore colourful head coverings, high-necked gowns with pleated full skirts, their breasts outlined in filmier fabric. The older men were in sombre cloaks, but wealthy young men wore their long hose with each leg dyed differently and patterned according to the family coat of arms.

Jacopo, sitting on top of a Roman sarcophagus, kept up a running commentary on the passing girls, seeking out the ones to whom he awarded his highest accolade: "Ah, how mattressable."

Michelangelo went to Jacopo's side and ran his hand over the funeral procession of men and horses on the sarcophagus. "Feel how these marble figures are still alive and breathing!"

His voice carried such exultation that his friends turned to stare at him. His secret—his hunger to carve—had burst into the open. He said, "God was the first sculptor; He made the first figure: man. And when He wanted to give His Commandments, what material did He use? Stone. Look at all us painters lolling on the Duomo steps. How many sculptors are left in Florence?" His eyes glowed in the fading light as he told them why there were no more sculptors: the strength needed to use hammer and chisel exhausted mind and body, in contrast to the brushes, pens and charcoal which the painters used so lightly.

Jacopo hooted, and Granacci answered his young friend: "If fatigue is the criterion of art, then the quarryman is nobler than the sculptor, the blacksmith greater than the goldsmith."

"But you do agree," Michelangelo said, "that art is noble in the degree to which it represents the truth? Sculpture is closer to true form, for the figure emerges on all four sides. It takes a thousand times more accuracy of judgment and vision."

Jacopo jumped down from his perch. "Sculpture is a bore. What can they make? A man, a woman, a lion, a horse. Then all over again. Monotonous. But the painter can portray the whole universe: sun, moon and stars, mountains, trees and rivers. The sculptors have all perished of boredom."

Tears of frustration welled in Michelangelo's eyes. "Painting is perishable: a fire in the chapel or too much cold, and the paint begins to fade, crack. But stone is eternal! Look at this Roman marble sarcophagus; as clear and strong as the day it was carved. . . ."

Mainardi raised his arm for attention. "Michelangelo," he said gently, "has it ever occurred to you that the reason there are no sculptors left is because of the cost of marble and bronze? Paint is cheap, commissions are abundant. Who would provide you with stone or support you while you practised on it?" Michelangelo could not answer. Without another word he walked away from the Duomo.

THAT NIGHT he rolled and tossed. Buonarroto, who shared his bed, was placid in sleep. In the other bed slept the good and evil of the Buonarroti sons: Lionardo, who yearned to be a saint; and Giovansimone, lazy and rude, who had once set fire to Lucrezia's kitchen because she had disciplined him. Sigismondo, the youngest, slept in a trundle-bed at the foot of Michelangelo's bed.

The room was hot. Michelangelo sprang out of bed, dressed and left the house. He walked through the city to a country road and made his way towards his old home in Settignano. When dawn flashed hot and bright, he paused on the Settignano hillside to watch the round hills of Tuscany emerge from sleep. He cared little about the poppies and cypress that so moved painters: he loved the Arno valley because it was a sculptured landscape. God was the supreme carver.

He climbed the road into the hills, between walls standing as much as thirteen feet high, and built to last a hundred generations. Stone was the dominant factor: with it the Tuscan built his houses, enclosed his fields, terraced his slopes. Nature had been bountiful with stone; every hill was an undeveloped quarry.

As Michelangelo walked through the tiny settlement towards the Buonarroti villa he passed stoneyards used by the greatest Florentine sculptors. None of them was active now. Donatello had died twenty-two years ago and Bertoldo, the heir to his vast knowledge and workshop, was ill. Andrea and Giovanni della Robbia had abandoned stone sculpture for enamelled terracotta reliefs. The Pollaiuolo brothers had moved to Rome. Yes, sculpture was dead. He had been born too late. Sick at heart, Michelangelo moved on.

THE BUONARROTI villa stood on a five-acre farm, leased to strangers on a long-term agreement. The house of *pietra serena* was beautiful in its austere lines, with broad porches overlooking the valley. He could remember his mother kissing him good night in his big corner room looking out across the fields.

Now he scampered down the hill between wheat and ripening grapes, and climbed the opposite ridge to the Topolino stoneyard. He paused when he came in sight of it. This was the picture which meant home and security for him: the father working with iron chisels to round a fluted column, the youngest son bevelling a set of steps, one of the

older two carving a window frame, the other graining a door panel; the grandfather polishing a column on a pumice wheelstone. Behind them were three arches, and under the arches scurrying chickens, ducks, pigs.

In the boy's mind there was no difference between a *scalpellino* and a *scultore*, a stone-cutter and a sculptor, for the *scalpellini* were fine craftsmen. Every stone of the Florentine palaces was cut, bevelled, given a textured surface as if it were a piece of sculpture. So proud were all Florentines of their simplest paving blocks that they bragged of the wretch who, being jostled in the cart that was taking him to the Palazzo della Signoria for hanging, cried out: "What idiots were these, who cut such clumsy blocks?"

The father heard Michelangelo's footsteps.

"*Buon dì,* Michelangelo. *Come va?* How goes it?"

"*Non c'è male.* Not bad. And you?"

"*Non c'è male.*"

The boys called out with welcoming warmth, and Michelangelo said, "*Salve,* good health, Bruno. *Salve,* Gilberto. *Salve,* Enrico."

A *scalpellino's* words are few and simple, matching the single blow of the hammer. When he chips at the stone, he does not speak at all: one two, three, four, five, six, seven: no word from the lips, only the rhythm of the moving hand with the chisel. Then he speaks, in the period of pause: one, two, three, four. The sentence must fit the rest count of four, or it remains unsaid.

The sons were given hammers and chisels at the age of six, and by ten were working full time. There was no marriage outside the stone ring, and no outsider could find work at the quarry. Between the arches hung an oblong piece of *pietra serena* with examples of the classic treatments of the stone: herring-bone, punch-hole, rustic, cross-hatch, linear, bevel, centred right angle, receding step: the first alphabet Michelangelo had studied.

Topolino spoke. "You're apprenticed to Ghirlandaio?"

"Yes."

"You do not like it?"

"Not greatly."

"Who does somebody else's trade makes soup in a basket," said the old grandfather.

"We could use a cutter." This was from Bruno.

Michelangelo looked to the father. "*Davvero?* It is true? You will take me as apprentice?"

"With stone you're no apprentice. You earn a share."

His heart leaped. Everyone chipped in silence. The father had just offered him a portion of the food that went into the family belly. "My father would not permit me.... But can I cut now?"

The grandfather replied: "Every little bit helps."

Michelangelo sat before a roughed-out column, a hammer in one hand, a chisel in the other. He had a natural skill; under his blows the *pietra serena* cut like cake. Contact with the stone made him feel that the world was right again.

The *pietra serena* they were working was an alive blue-grey. It was durable yet manageable. The Topolinos had taught him to seek the natural form of the stone; never to grow angry or unsympathetic towards the material: "Stone works with you. It reveals itself. But you must strike it right. Each stone has its own character. It must be understood. Remember, stone gives itself to skill and to love."

The stone was master; not the mason. If a mason beat his stone as an ignorant farmer might beat his beasts, the warm breathing material became dull; died under his hand. To sympathy, it yielded: it grew luminous and sparkling. Stone was mystic: it had to be covered at night because it would crack if the full moon got on it. Stone was called by the stone-cutters after the most precious of foods: *carne*, meat.

Monna Margherita, a formless woman who worked the animals and fields as well as the stove and tub, came out of the house and stood listening. Of her Lodovico had said bitterly, when Michelangelo wished to work with his hands: "A child sent out to nurse will take on the condition of the woman who feeds him."

She had suckled him with her own son for two years, and the day her breast ran dry she put both boys on wine. Water was for bathing before Mass.

Michelangelo kissed her on both cheeks.

"*Pazienza, figlo mio,*" she counselled. "Ghirlandaio is a good master. Who has an art, has always a part."

The father rose. "I must go to the quarry. Come and help load."

They rode on the high seat behind two beautiful white oxen. In the

fields the olive pickers worked on ladders made of slender tree stalks. Baskets were tied round their waists with rope. They held the branches with their left hands, stripping the little black olives with a milking movement of the right.

As they rounded a bend, Michelangelo saw the quarry with its blue and grey *serena* and iron-stained streaks. High on the cliff several men were using a *scribbus*—a point—to mark out a block to be quarried. He could see the point marks outlining blocks throughout the formation.

The work area where the blocks fell after they were loosed was shimmering with dust. Topolino inspected the newly quarried stone: "That one has knots. Too much iron in this. This one will be hollow." Until finally: "Ah! Here is a beautiful piece of meat."

Michelangelo planted his legs wide before the block and swung his weight from the hips; Topolino tipped it up with an iron bar. Between them, they moved it over the boulders to open ground; then, with the help of the quarrymen, the block was levered up into the cart.

Michelangelo wiped the sweat from his face and bade Topolino goodbye. *"A domani,"* replied Topolino, flicking the lines for the oxen to move off. *Until tomorrow,* Michelangelo thought, "tomorrow" being the next time I take my place with the family, be it a week or a year. He made his way down the mountain, feeling fifteen feet tall.

HAVING TAKEN a day off without permission, Michelangelo was at the studio early. Ghirlandaio had been there all night, drawing by candlelight. He was unshaven, his beard blue in the flickering light. He rose, raised his hands and shook his fingers up and down loosely, as though trying to shed his troubles. The boy came to him and gazed down at dozens of irresolute sketches of the Christ whom John was to baptize. The figures were slight to the point of delicacy. "I'm intimidated by the subject," Ghirlandaio growled.

For a week Michelangelo himself tried to draw a Christ. Finally he set down a figure with powerful shoulders, robust thighs, big solid feet: a man who could split a block of *pietra serena* with one blow of the hammer. Ghirlandaio was shocked when Michelangelo showed it to him. "Florence wouldn't accept a working-class Christ," he said.

Michelangelo smiled. "Christ was a carpenter."

A few days later the studio was buzzing. Ghirlandaio had completed

his Christ and was blowing it up to full size to transfer to the fresco. When Michelangelo saw the finished figure he stood stunned: it was *his* Christ; but Ghirlandaio apparently had forgotten the boy's drawing.

The following week the studio again moved *en masse* to Santa Maria Novella to start a fresco of the Death of the Virgin. Michelangelo stood beneath the painters' scaffolding, unnoticed, then walked down the long centre nave towards the sunlight. He turned to take a final look at the scaffolding rising tier upon tier in front of the stained-glass windows; at the artists, tiny figures before their work; at the sacks of plaster and sand, the plank table of painting materials. He pulled a wooden bench into place, took drawing paper and charcoal out of his shirt and began drawing the scene before him. After a while he felt someone staring holes through him from behind, and turned to find Ghirlandaio.

Ghirlandaio whispered hoarsely, "There are some things you know more about than I do, and I have been working for thirty years! Come to the studio early tomorrow. Perhaps we can make things more interesting for you."

Next morning Ghirlandaio made Granacci put him to work on a rock wall at the back of the studio yard. "Your plaster has to be sound," Granacci told Michelangelo. "If it crumbles your fresco goes with it. Check for saltpetre; it eats up your paint. Your lime should be old. I'll show you how to use a trowel to get a smooth surface. Plaster has to be beaten with the least possible amount of water, to the consistency of butter."

"Granacci, I want to draw with a pen, not a trowel!"

Granacci replied sharply: "An artist has to be master of the grubbiest detail of his craft."

When the mixture was right he handed Michelangelo a flexible trowel with which to apply the plaster. Michelangelo soon had the feel of it. When the plaster had dried sufficiently Granacci held up an old studio cartoon—a full-sized drawing to be transferred to a fresco. Michelangelo used an ivory pointing stick to punch holes through the cartoon, outlining several figures on the plaster; then he filled the holes with charcoal. When Granacci removed the cartoon, the boy took red ochre and drew a connecting outline between these dots. When this had dried, he dusted off the remaining charcoal with a feather. There was now the outline for a picture.

Mainardi came into the studio and forcibly turned Michelangelo to him. "Remember that fresh plaster changes its consistency. In the morning you have to keep your colours liquid so that you don't choke up its pores. Towards sundown the plaster will absorb less. But before you can apply any colours you must learn how to grind them." The colours came from the apothecary in walnut-sized pieces of pigment. A piece of porphyry stone and a porphyry pestle were used to grind. No paint on a Ghirlandaio panel was ground for less than two hours.

Ghirlandaio had entered the studio. "Hold on," he exclaimed. "Michelangelo, if you want a real mineral black, use this black chalk; if you want a slag black, mix in a little mineral green."

"What's the good of teaching him about colours," Granacci exclaimed, "if he doesn't know how to make his own brushes? Look, Michelangelo, these hog bristles are taken from white pigs; be sure they're domestic. Use a pound of bristles——"

Michelangelo threw his arms up in mock despair. "Help! You're crowding my three years of apprenticeship into one morning!"

IT WAS autumn before he was ready to create his first fresco, from drawings he had made for the Death of the Virgin. He and Granacci climbed the scaffolding loaded with buckets of plaster and water, brushes, mixing spoons, cartoons and coloured sketches. Michelangelo laid a modest area of *intonaco*, then held the cartoon of a bearded apostle to the wall. When it was outlined, he mixed his paints and picked up a finely pointed brush. He paused and turned to Granacci with big eyes.

"I can't be of any more help to you, Michelagnolo," Granacci said. "The rest is between you and God. *Buona fortuna.*"

He scrambled down the scaffolding.

Michelangelo was alone at the top of the choir. For a moment he was dizzy: how vastly hollow and empty the church looked from here! In his nostrils was the dampness of the fresh plaster and the pungency of paint. He took a little *terra verde* and began to shade the darkest parts of the face: under the chin, the nose, the lips. . . .

By the third day everyone knew he was not following the rules. He was drawing nude figures, then draping them with robes—the reverse of the usual practice of suggesting a man's bones by the folds of a cloak. Ghirlandaio made no effort to correct him. His two figures were a

distinct picture by themselves, set in the bottom corner of the panel. The rest of the lunette was crowded with more than twenty figures surrounding the Virgin's bier. It was difficult to find Mary.

When Michelangelo came down from the scaffold for the last time, everybody contributed a few scudi to buy wine. Jacopo raised the first toast: "To our new comrade. You've stolen the fresco."

Late that afternoon Ghirlandaio called him aside.

"They are saying I am jealous of you. It is true. Oh, not of those two figures, they're immature and crude. But I am jealous of what will ultimately be your ability to draw."

THE VALLEY of the Arno had the worst winter weather in Italy. The skies were leaden, the cold bit at the flesh. Ghirlandaio's studio had but one fire-place. Here the men sat at a semicircular table facing the flames, their backs cold but their fingers getting enough heat to let them work. Santa Maria Novella was even worse. Draughts rattled the scaffolding; the apprentices painted in a high wind.

By March, warmer skies were powdered with a touch of blue. One day Granacci burst into the studio. "Come with me," he said to Michelangelo. "I have something to show you."

In a moment they were in the street. Granacci took Michelangelo to a gate opposite the cathedral and opened it. Michelangelo entered and stood confounded. He was in an enormous garden; at the end of a path were a pool, a fountain, and a marble statue of a boy removing a thorn from his foot. On the wide porch of a casino a group of young men were chiselling stone. In front of the garden walls were loggias displaying marble busts of Roman emperors; cypress-lined paths curved through lawns as big as meadows.

Michelangelo stuttered: "Wh—what . . . is this?"

"A sculpture garden. Lorenzo de' Medici, *Il Magnifico*, has started a school here. He had Bertoldo carried here on a litter from the hospital, and told him he must restore Florence to its days of greatness in sculpture. Bertoldo got off the litter and promised Lorenzo that the era of Donatello would be re-created. That's Bertoldo over there. I met him once."

They walked over to the casino. Half a dozen men from fifteen to thirty years old were working at tables. Bertoldo, so slight as to seem

all spirit and no body, wore a turban. He was instructing two boys in roughing a piece of marble. Since he was busy, Granacci led Michelangelo on through the casino, which displayed Lorenzo's collection of cameos, coins and medals, and examples from all the artists who had worked for the Medici family, a trove that staggered the boy.

"Who are the apprentices?" Michelangelo asked as they walked home. "How did they get in?"

"Lorenzo and Bertoldo chose them."

"And I have more than two years left at Ghirlandaio's. *Mamma mia*, I have destroyed myself!"

"Pazienza!" consoled Granacci. "You are not an old man yet."

"Patience!" exploded Michelangelo. "Granacci, I've got to get in! Now! I don't want to be a painter. I want to be a marble carver. How can I get admitted?"

"I don't know."

Tears of frustration came to Michelangelo's eyes. "Oh, Granacci, have you ever wanted anything so hard you couldn't bear it?"

"No. Everything has always been there."

"How fortunate you are."

Granacci gazed at the naked longing on his friend's face. "Perhaps."

BOOK TWO
The Sculpture Garden



He was drawn to the sculpture garden as though the ancient statues were magnets. Sometimes he did not know that his feet were carrying him there. He would find himself inside the gate, lurking in the shadows. He did not venture to the casino where Bertoldo and the apprentices were working. He just stood motionless, hunger in his eyes.

Long into the night, as his brothers lay sleeping, he thought of it. "There must be a way. Two whole years with Ghirlandaio! How will I endure it?"

One day, just a year after Michelangelo's apprenticeship started, he

came into the studio to find it crackling with tension. Ghirlandaio was sitting at his desk, his scowl black.

"*Il Magnifico* has summoned me and asked if I would like to send my two best apprentices to his new school," he said.

Michelangelo stood riveted to the studio floor.

"No, I would not like to send my two best apprentices!" cried Ghirlandaio. "To have my workshop raided! But who dares say no to *Il Magnifico*? You, Buonarroti. You would like to go?"

"I have been hanging round that garden like a starved dog in front of a butcher's stall," pleaded Michelangelo.

"*Basta!* Enough! Granacci, you and Buonarroti are released from your apprenticeship. Now back to work, all of you!"

Joy drenched Michelangelo like a warm rain. He went to Ghirlandaio's desk. He wanted to thank him; but how do you thank a man for letting you abandon him?

Ghirlandaio saw the conflict on the boy's face. He spoke softly. "You were right, Buonarroti: fresco is not your trade. That last figure you did looks as if it were carved out of rock. You have talent as a draughtsman; perhaps you can transfer it to stone. But never forget that Domenico Ghirlandaio was your first master."

That evening Michelangelo and Granacci went into the family-room where his father sat hunched over the angular corner desk.

"Father, there is news. Granacci and I are leaving Ghirlandaio's, to study sculpture in the Medici garden."

"Michelangelo a sculptor!"

Lodovico raised anguished arms.

"A sculptor is only a labourer, like a wood-chopper. How large is your wage?"

"I don't know. I didn't ask."

"You didn't ask!" sneered Lodovico. "Do you think we can support you for ever in your follies?"

Granacci said, "I asked. No pay. Just instruction."

Lodovico collapsed heavily on to a hard leather chair, tears coming to his eyes.

Detachedly Michelangelo thought: "We Florentines have no real sentiment, yet we cry so easily." He put a hand on his father's shoulder. "Father, give me a chance."

Lodovico said, "I will never give my consent." He rose and left the room.

"You must seize this opportunity anyway," said Granacci.

THE MEDICI sculpture garden was unlike Ghirlandaio's rushing workshop. On the warm April day when Michelangelo began his apprenticeship, the feel of the garden was: "Take your time. We have only one mission here: to teach. You have only to grow. *Calma!* Prepare yourself for a lifetime of sculpturing."

Bertoldo, with his snow-white hair and pale-blue eyes, was the inheritor of all the knowledge of the Golden Age of Florentine sculpture. He loved only two things as well as sculpture: laughter and cooking. He had written a cookery-book, and his humour was as spicy as his chicken *alla diavola*.

He linked his thin arms through those of the new apprentices. "Not all skill is communicable," he explained. "Donatello made me his heir, but he could never make me his peer. We are all as God made us. I will show you everything Donatello taught me; how much you absorb depends on your capacity. And now to work."

Michelangelo thought, "Just let them put a hammer and *subbia* in my hands and they will see the chips fly!" But Bertoldo had no intention of putting these tools into the hands of a beginner. He gave Michelangelo a drawing desk on the portico beside a seventeen-year-old apprentice called Torrigiani, a handsome, fair-haired, green-eyed young man, who soon became Michelangelo's closest companion among the apprentices. He was audacious and quarrelsome, but he gave Michelangelo a quick, warm friendship.

When Michelangelo asked whether Granacci did not think Torrigiani fascinating, Granacci replied guardedly: "I have known him all my life. Before you make a friend, eat a peck of salt with him."

He had been in the garden for a week when Lorenzo de' Medici entered with a young girl. For the first time Michelangelo saw the man who, without official title, ruled Florence and had made her wealthy not only in trade but in art, literature, scholarship. Forty years old, Lorenzo had a rough-hewn face that appeared to have been carved out of mountain rock; a jutting jaw, a turned-up nose, large dark eyes and a mass of dark hair. He was just over medium height, with a sturdy

physique which he kept in condition by hard riding and hawking.

He was an omnivorous reader of Greek and Latin, a poet and the builder of Europe's first public library, for which he had assembled ten thousand manuscripts and books. He was acknowledged to be the greatest of all patrons of literature and art, and his art collection was open to all artists and students. He provided villas for scholars on the slope of Fiesole, and here the leaders of his "Plato Academy," Pico della Mirandola, Poliziano, Ficino and Landino, helped to create a new intellectual life.

Lorenzo, though the richest man in the world, had an open, lovable nature, and a total lack of arrogance. He walked the streets of Florence unattended, speaking to all citizens as an equal, exercising absolute authority in matters of policy, yet governing Florence with such good judgment, courtesy and dignity that people who might otherwise be enemies worked together harmoniously.

This was the man who stood a few feet from Michelangelo, talking affectionately to Bertoldo about some antique sculptures that had just arrived from Asia Minor: for sculpture was as important to Lorenzo as his fleets of ships, his chain of banks, his millions of florinsworth of trade each year in wool, oil, wine, perfume, flavourings and silks.

Lorenzo stopped to chat with the apprentices, and Michelangelo turned his gaze to the girl walking beside him. She was a pale, slight thing, younger than himself; as Lorenzo passed his table Michelangelo's eyes met hers. He stopped in his work. She stopped in her walk. He could not take his gaze from her piquant face. Michelangelo felt an awakening between them, a quickened breath. For a moment he thought she was going to speak to him. But Lorenzo put his arm about her tiny waist, and they strolled out into the piazza.

Michelangelo turned to Torrigiani.

"Who was that girl?"

"Contessina. *Il Magnifico's* daughter. The last one left in the palace."

LODOVICO had never given his consent to Michelangelo's entering the garden and declined to acknowledge it. Michelangelo's family saw little of him anyway, for he left at dawn, came home at twelve to eat, and loitered on his way home in the evening so they would be in bed and there would be only his grandmother waiting in the kitchen to give

him a light supper. Theirs was an abiding love.



At the garden he plunged into drawing. Models came from every quarter of Florence: scholars in black velvet; bull-necked soldiers; swashbuckling toughs; peasants; monks; nobles in red and white silk hemmed with pearls; chubby children to serve as models for cupids.

Michelangelo grumbled at Bertoldo's criticism of a torso he had drawn:

"How can we draw only from the outside?" he said. "All we see is what pushes against the skin. If we could follow the inside of a body: the bone, muscle"

"Doctors are allowed to dissect one body, one day a year, in front of the city council," Bertoldo said. "Other than this it is the worst crime in Florence. Put it out of your mind."

"My mouth, yes; my mind, no. I'll never sculpture accurately until I can see how a human body works."

"Not even the Greeks dissected, and they were a pagan people. Must you be better than Phidias?"

"Better, no. Different, yes."

He began staying late in the garden, unknown to anyone, picking up tools and working the scraps of stone lying about: yellowish-white travertine from Rome, dark green marble from Prato, reddish-yellow marble from Siena. His greatest joy came when someone left behind a fragment of pure white Carrara, a rare and costly stone. He began to experiment with the point, the toothed and flat chisels, working surface



textures on the marble. It was the finest hour of the day for him, alone in the garden, with only the statues for company.

Inevitably he was caught; but by the last person he would have expected. Contessina de' Medici came to the garden nearly every day now, if not with Lorenzo, then with the scholarly Ficino or Pico della Mirandola. She spoke to the other apprentices, whom she had known a long time; but no one introduced Michelangelo. Still, he knew instantly when she entered the gate. Always she stopped at Torrigiani's table, and he could hear her laughter as Torrigiani amused her. She never looked at Michelangelo.

When she left he felt emotionally exhausted. Fourteen-year-old Michelangelo could not understand this. He knew no girls; he cared

nothing for girls. Why was it painful when he saw Contessina laughing with Torrigiani? What could she mean to him, this princess of the noble Medici blood? He wished she would stay away, leave him in peace. . . . It was a long time, deep into the summer, before he realized that he was jealous of Torrigiani.

And he was appalled.

And now she had discovered him in the garden after the others had left. She was with her young brother Giovanni, a fat boy with a cast in his eye, who, in the manner of that corrupt time, had already been given many church offices, and was about to become a cardinal. They were accompanied by their cousin Giulio, the illegitimate son of Lorenzo's beloved brother Giuliano who had been stabbed to death in the Duomo by conspirators against the Medici.

As the two boys inspected the garden, Contessina spoke to Michelangelo for the first time. "*Buona sera,* Michelangelo."

"*Buona sera,* Contessina." He did not stop working on his carving.

"The stone has a smell."

"Of freshly picked figs."

"And this?" She pointed to a piece of marble on the bench beside him. "Does it smell of freshly picked plums?"

"No, it has hardly any. Smell for yourself."

She crinkled her nose, laughing at him. He began raining blows with the chisel that sent the chips flying.

"Doesn't such furious work exhaust you? It would me."

He knew of her frailty, the consumption that had taken her mother and sister within the past year. Lorenzo was so devoted to her, they said, because she was not long for this world.

"No, no, cutting stone does not take strength out of you, it puts it back in. When you work this white marble it comes alive under your hands."

"Under *your* hands, Michelangelo. Will you finish that design on the *pietra serena* for me? I like it."

She stood still, above him, as he crouched over the stone. When he came to a hard spot he looked round for a water bucket, saw none, and spat precisely on the area he wanted to soften.

Amused, she asked, "What do you do when you run dry?"

He blushed. "No good stone-cutter ever ran out of spit."

WITH THE first intense heat in the garden came the first casualty: a young apprentice called Soggi. His enthusiasm withered like the meadow grass.

"A butcher on the Ponte Vecchio is looking for help," he said. "The chisel, it's just like a knife. . . ." So moon-faced Bugiardini, from Ghirlandaio's studio, took his place.

Granacci also found he could not work with stone, and Lorenzo asked him to become manager of the garden. He enjoyed this, spending his days making sure that the proper stone, iron or bronze arrived, setting up contests for the apprentices. He also painted. Michelangelo was angry when Lorenzo pressed Granacci into service to design banners and arches for a pageant.

"Granacci, how can you stand here singing happily, painting decorations that will be thrown out the day after the pageant?"

"But not everything has to be profound and eternal. Pageants and parties give people pleasure, and pleasure is as important as food or drink—or art."

"You . . . you . . . Florentine!"

MICHELANGELO was unhappy at home. Lodovico had managed to learn how much other apprentices were receiving in prize money, awards and commissions.

"But you?" he demanded one day. "Not one scudo after eight months. Why the others and not you?"

"I don't know."

"Lorenzo has never noticed you?"

"Never."

"Does Bertoldo praise your work?"

"No. Though I draw better than the others."

"If you are to be a sculptor, why don't you do sculpture?"

"Bertoldo says I'm not ready."

"But the others sculpture. That means that you have less ability than they."

"That will be proved when I get my hands on stone."

"When will that be?"

"I don't know."

"You are almost fifteen. Are you to earn nothing for ever?" Lodovico

cried. "I should beat you with a stick. When will you get some sense in your head?" He slumped into a chair. "Lionardo is studying to become a monk. Whoever heard of a Buonarroti a monk? You want to become an artist. Whoever heard of a Buonarroti an artist? Giovansimone is becoming a street rowdy. Whoever heard of a Buonarroti as a *malandrino*? Sigismondo cannot learn his letters. Whoever heard of an illiterate Buonarroti? I don't know what a man has sons for!"

Michelangelo put a finger lightly on his father's shoulder. "Trust me, Father. I am not looking for wool on an ass."

BERTOLDO was pushing him hard, never pleased, crying: "No, no, you can do it better! Again!" Making him draw models from a ladder above, the floor beneath, obliging him to come in on a holiday to create a theme that would embrace all the figures he had sketched during the week. Walking home with Granacci at night, Michelangelo cried in anguish: "Why am I the only one who cannot enter competitions or work on commissions? Or even visit the palace and see the art works? You're the manager now. Speak to Bertoldo. Help me!"

"When Bertoldo considers you ready for contests, he'll say so."

There was something else he was unhappy about: with the wet weather, Lorenzo had forbidden Contessina to leave the palace. Now that she no longer came, the garden seemed empty, the days long.

In his loneliness he turned to Torrigiani, and they became inseparable. When Bertoldo saw a drawing of Michelangelo's in which he imitated Torrigiani, he tore it into shreds. "Walk with a cripple for a year and at the end you will limp!" he said.

FINALLY, Bertoldo realized that Michelangelo had reached the bounds of patience. One day he put an arm as brittle as an autumn leaf about the boy's shoulder and said: "And so—on to sculpture!"

Sweat broke out on Michelangelo's forehead. His heart pounded.

"Now what is sculpture?" demanded Bertoldo. "It is the art of removing all that is superfluous from the material under treatment, to reduce it, with hammer and chisel, to the form in the artist's mind. Or one may make successive additions, as in modelling in clay or wax."

Michelangelo shook his head. "Not for me. I want to work as the Greeks did, carving straight from the marble."

"A noble ambition. But first you must learn to model in clay and wax."

Bertoldo showed him how to make an armature, using sticks of wood or iron wires. Once the framework was up, Michelangelo started applying the warm wax to see how close he could come to creating a three-dimensional figure from a two-dimensional drawing.

"It must be perfect, not only from the front but from every angle," said Bertoldo. "Which means that every piece has to be sculptured not once but three hundred and sixty times, because at each change of degree it becomes a different piece."

Michelangelo was fascinated. After he had massed his wax on the frame, he worked it with tools of iron and bone, refined it with his strong fingers. The results had raw power.

"But no grace," Bertoldo said. "And not the slightest facial resemblance to the model."

"The devil with portraiture. I will never like it."

"Never is longer at your age than mine. When you're hungry and the Duke of Milan asks you to do his portrait"

Michelangelo glowered. "I don't get that hungry."

Spring was coming; Lodovico now insisted that Michelangelo leave the garden in April if he could not earn some money. He asked Bertoldo's permission to copy in stone some of the clay figures he had been modelling.

"No, my son," said Bertoldo, "you are not ready."

"The others are; I am not?"

"You have much to learn. *Pazienza.* God shapes the back to the burden."

MICHELANGELO had still not been invited to the palace; and when Lorenzo invited even Bugiardini, he felt his own exclusion implied rejection. Then, one March day, Bertoldo said: "There's a newly discovered Faun just arrived at the palace. Pagan Greek, fifth century B.C. You must see it. Come along."

The Medici palace was large enough to house a numerous family, the government of a republic, a world-wide business, and a centre for artists and scholars. Yet it was austere, with a majestic simplicity.

They went through a massive gate into the square courtyard where

Michelangelo saw two of the great sculptures of the city: the Davids of Donatello and of Verrocchio. He rushed with a cry of joy to touch them before following Bertoldo into the palace. As they went from room to room his head began to spin: no good Italian artist was unrepresented. Marbles and paintings were in every hallway, salon, office, bedroom. Finally, they reached Lorenzo's study. His desk was set beneath shelves full of treasures: jewels, cameos, small marble bas-reliefs. "Over there is the new Faun," Bertoldo said. "I will leave you to study it."

Michelangelo went close to the Faun and looked into its gleaming, wicked eyes. The long beard was stained as though with wine spilt in merriment. It seemed so intensely alive that Michelangelo threw back his head and laughed. Then he took drawing paper and crayon from inside his shirt, and sketched the antique, time-battered Faun as he imagined it would have appeared when the Greek sculptor carved it two thousand years before.

A faint perfume came to his nostrils. He whirled round abruptly.

Many weeks had passed since he had seen her. She was such a slight little body. "Michelangelo"

How could there be so much joy from this mere pronouncing of a name? "Contessina! I did not dare hope I would see you. Bertoldo brought me to see the Faun."

"Father won't let me come with him to the garden until the spring. You do not think I will die of consumption?"

"You will live to bear many sons." Colour flooded her cheeks. "I have not offended you?" he asked apologetically.

She shook her head. "They told me you were blunt." She moved closer to him. "When I am near you I feel strong. Why?"

"When I am near you I feel confused. Why?"

She laughed, a gay, light sound. "I miss the garden."

"The garden misses you."

"I should not have thought it noticed."

"It noticed."

She turned from the intensity of his voice. "Your work goes well?"

"Non c'è male."

"You're not very communicative."

"I do not aspire to be a talker."

"Then you should mask your eyes. They say things that please me."

He felt exposed, humiliated for showing emotion. He picked up his sketching paper. "I must work now."

Anger flared into her eyes. "One does not dismiss a Medici," she said. Then a tiny smile moved in. She put out her small hand, fragile as a bird in his rough paw. "*Addio*, Michelangelo. Work well."

That night he was sleepless. In his mind was the picture of a small piece of marble, lying in the grass at the back of the sculpture garden. It was exactly the right size for a Faun like the one in Lorenzo's study —but his own! . . . At dawn he went to the garden, found the marble block, and carried it to the back of the casino. He knew he had no right to touch it, that it was disobeying Bertoldo, who thought he was not ready for stone. Well, he was on his way out anyway if his father had his way.

His hands caressed the stone, searched out its contours. For him it was a living, breathing substance. "Why," he asked himself, trembling, "do I feel like this?" Not until this moment, with his hands tenderly on the milky-white marble, had he come fully alive. This was what he must be: a white-marble sculptor, nothing more, nothing less. He picked up Torrigiani's tools, placed his chisel on the block, struck the first blow with his hammer. He, the marble, the hammer and chisel were one.

THE FAUN was completed. For three nights he had worked behind the casino; for three days he had hidden it beneath a wool cloth. Now he carried it to his work-bench. He was willing for Bertoldo to see it: his own sensual, gloating Faun. He was polishing it when Lorenzo came down the walk.

"Ah, my Faun," he said. "But you've left out his beard."

"The sculptor is not a copyist. He must create something new from something old."

"And where does the new come from?"

"From where all art comes. Inside himself."

He saw a flicker in Lorenzo's eye.

"Your Faun is old, but you've left him all his teeth," he said.

When he left, Michelangelo took up his chisel and went to work on the Faun's mouth. Lorenzo returned to the garden the next day. He stopped in front of the work-bench. "Your Faun has matured twenty

years in a day." Lorenzo seemed pleased. "I see you have removed an upper tooth. And two lower ones in the other corner."

"For balance."

"It was perceptive of you to rework the entire mouth." Lorenzo stared at him for a moment. Then he said, "I'm pleased."

The next morning a scarlet-coated page appeared and Bertoldo called out: "Michelangelo, you are wanted at the palace."

Was he to be sent home for stealing that block of marble? He looked at Bertoldo, but the old man's expression told him nothing. He followed the page to *Il Magnifico's* library, where he was seated behind his desk.

Lorenzo said, "How old are you, Michelangelo?"

"Fifteen."

Lorenzo opened his desk and took out a parchment folio. From it he spread out dozens of drawings. Michelangelo could not believe what he saw. "But . . . those are mine!"

"Just so. We have put many obstacles in your path, Michelangelo. Bertoldo has given harsh criticism and little praise or promise of reward. We knew you were gifted but did not know your character. If you had left us for praise or money"

There was a silence in the beautiful room. Michelangelo could not speak. Lorenzo came round to the boy's side. "Michelangelo, you have the makings of a sculptor. Bertoldo and I are convinced that you could become heir to Ghiberti, Donatello. I would like you to live in the palace as a member of my family. From now on you need concern yourself only with sculpture."

"I like best to work in marble."

Lorenzo chuckled. "No thanks, no expression of pleasure at coming to live in the palace of a Medici! Only your feeling for marble. Will you bring your father to me?"

"Tomorrow."

IN THE PALACE, standing before Lorenzo, the son found the father humble, pathetic. And he felt sorry for him.

"Buonarroti, I would like Michelangelo to live in the palace, and become a sculptor. Everything will be provided for him."

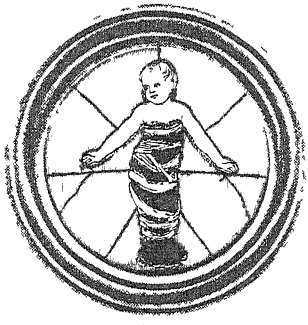
"*Magnifico messere*, I cannot deny you," replied Lodovico, bowing deeply. "All of us are at the pleasure of Your Magnificence."

"Is there anything in Florence I can do for you yourself?"

"There is a place open in the custom-house——"

"The custom-house! I had expected you would ask something grander. But you may have the place." He turned back to Michelangelo. A warm smile lighted the dark, homely face. "It is sixty years since my grandfather Cosimo took Donatello into his house to execute his great bronze David."

BOOK THREE
The Palace



AT THE PALACE, a page escorted him up to a room above the central courtyard. Bertoldo opened the door. "Welcome, Michelangelo, to my home. *Il Magnifico* thinks I have so little time left he wants me to teach you in my sleep!"

Michelangelo saw two wooden beds, each with a coffer at its foot, in the wings of an L-shaped, tapestry-hung room. Bertoldo's leather-bound cookery-book, and models of some of his sculptures were displayed in a cupboard in the corner. "Your sculptures are beautiful by candlelight," Michelangelo said.

"Poliziano says, 'Bertoldo is not a sculptor of miniatures, he is a miniature sculptor.' Isn't it a bit pathetic that from your pillow you can see my whole lifetime of work?"

"But sculpture isn't measured by how many pounds it weighs."

"Mine is a modest contribution: talent is cheap. Dedication is expensive: it will cost you your life."

"What else is life for?"

"Alas, I thought it was for many things: falconry, good food, pretty girls. You know the Florentine adage, 'Life is to be enjoyed.' But a sculptor must create a *body of work*—enough to permeate the whole world."

Next day the palace tailor brought Michelangelo a new outfit. He stood before the mirror surveying himself. It was amazing how much more attractive he looked in the crimson *berretto*, violet cloak, golden

shirt and stockings. And he himself had changed: he was taller, and he had put on weight.

In his absorption, he did not see Bertoldo enter.

"You fancy yourself in that raiment? It is for feast days only. Put on this blouse and tunic."

Michelangelo sighed. "Ah well, put not an embroidered crupper on a plough horse."

THAT EVENING they made their way to the dining-hall, where a U-shaped table seated sixty people. Contessina put her hand on the chair next to hers, inviting him to join her. The table was set with square, gold-trimmed crystal, silver plates with the Florentine lily inlaid in gold. The palace orchestra was playing in a shell-shaped niche. He watched the colourful array of diners: Lorenzo's daughter Lucrezia and her husband, Jacopo Salviati; two cardinals from Spain; reigning families from Bologna, Ferrara, Arezzo; scholars from Paris and Berlin; members of the Signoria, or city council, of Florence; merchants from Athens, Peking, Alexandria, London. Piero de' Medici, eldest son of Lorenzo, and his elegantly gowned wife, Alfonsina, of a noble Roman family, came in late and had to sit at the foot of the table. Michelangelo saw that they were offended.

"Piero and Alfonsina don't approve of all this republicanism," Contessina whispered. "They think we should hold court, with only Medici allowed at the head of the table."

Giovanni, Lorenzo's second son, and his cousin Giulio entered. Giovanni, the churchman, was tall and corpulent, with a heavy face; Giulio, dark, handsome and saturnine. His eyes slashed through the assemblage, missing nothing that could be useful to him.

The serving-men passed heavy silver trays of fish. A young man in a multicoloured shirt picked up a small fish, put it to his mouth, then to his ear as though talking to it, and after a moment burst into tears. Michelangelo looked in perplexity at Contessina.

"Jacquo, the palace buffoon," she said.

"Why are you crying, Jacquo?" asked Lorenzo.

"My father was drowned years ago. I asked this little fish whether he ever saw him anywhere. He said he was too young to have met him and suggested that I ask those bigger fish on the platter."

Michelangelo was too surprised at finding a buffoon at Lorenzo's table to smile. Contessina, who had been watching him, asked, "Don't you like to laugh?"

"I am unpractised. No one laughs in my house."

"You are what my French tutor calls *un homme sérieux*. My father is a serious man too. Still, he enjoys all this noise and talk and fun."

The servants brought in sucking-pigs, roasted on a spit, with rosemary in their mouths. An improviser upon the lute entertained by singing the news and gossip of the week, accompanied by satiric comments in verse.

Later, as the guests promenaded, Contessina slipped her arm through Michelangelo's. "Do you know what it means to be a friend?" she asked.

"Granacci has tried to teach me."

"Everyone is a friend to the Medici," she said quietly, "and no one."

THE FOLLOWING morning Bertoldo took him to the marble blocks in the sculpture garden. "I am not a great sculptor," he said. "But with you perhaps I can become a great teacher. Remember that the figure you carve must run with the block: to see how the veins run, pour water on it."

Then Bertoldo told him about air bubbles, spots in the marble which become hollow after weathering. They cannot be seen from the outside, and one must learn to know when they are inside.

"Here is a punch. It is a tool to remove stone. Here are an *ugnetto* and a *scarpello* to shape it." Bertoldo showed him how to tear out large pieces of marble with rhythmical strokes, making circular lines round the block; how to work all parts simultaneously, balancing relationships.

The workshop was also a combination forge, carpenter's and blacksmith's shop. Granacci had bought rods of Swedish iron so that Michelangelo could make himself a set of nine chisels; for "the man who does not make his own tools does not make his own sculpture."

The next morning Michelangelo rose quietly in the dark in order to be in the garden at dawn. The first rays of the sun revealed the truth about marble, making it almost translucent; all veins, faults, hollows were mercilessly exposed.

He went from block to block, tapping with his hammer. The solid

blocks gave out a bell-like sound, the defective ones a dull thud. One small weather-beaten piece had developed a tough skin. With hammer and chisel he cut down to the pure milky substance below. To learn the direction of the veins, he held his hammer tightly and fractured off the high corners. He liked what he saw; took a piece of charcoal and drew the head of an old man on the marble. Then he pulled up a bench, straddled the block, gripping it with both knees, picked up hammer and chisel. Tensions within him fell away with each falling chip. Stone filled him out, made him whole. His arm grew lighter and stronger with the passing of the hours, as he wholly possessed the stone. It was the act of love, creating the living work of art; for Michelangelo it was the supreme sensation.

When Bertoldo came in and saw him at work, he cried out, "No, no, that's the wrong technique. Stop!"

Michelangelo did not hear him. Bertoldo shook his head in amused despair. "As well try to keep Vesuvius from erupting."

LORENZO's "Plato Academy" was the intellectual heart of Europe: a university and a printing press which proposed to turn Florence into a second Athens. Michelangelo met the Plato group at supper in Lorenzo's study where fruit, cheese and bread were served from a food lift in the wall. Ficino, Landino, Poliziano and Pico della Mirandola were the outstanding brains of Italy. Michelangelo heard their case against the churchmen of that time. Much of the clergy had become immoral in personal conduct and lax in clerical practice. The outstanding exception was the Augustinian Order at Santo Spirito, living in flawless self-discipline under a man Michelangelo knew, the vigorous Prior Bichiellini.

Pico della Mirandola, youngest of the group, said, "I think I have an answer to this problem. There is a Dominican monk in Ferrara called Savonarola. His ambition is to purify the Church. I've heard him preach. He shakes the ribs of the cathedral."

"If he would work with us . . ." said Lorenzo.

"Your Excellency might request his transfer to Florence?"

"I'll attend to it."

The scholars next turned their attention to Michelangelo, recommending books he should read, offering to teach him Greek and Latin. Certain he could learn neither, he was relieved when they went on to

other subjects. The most important idea he gleaned from the swift, learned talk was that religion and knowledge could exist side by side, enriching each other. This little group of men was attempting to create a new philosophy under the banner of a word Michelangelo had never heard before: *Humanism*. Gradually he gathered what Humanism meant: *We are giving the world back to man, and man back to himself. Without a free, vigorous mind, man is but an animal. We return to him his arts, literature and sciences, his independence to think and feel. He must not be bound to religious dogma like an unthinking slave.*

Later he said to Bertoldo, "They made me feel stupid."

"They can give you heroic themes to ponder." Then, to console the tired youth, Bertoldo said, "But they cannot carve marble, and that is a language as eloquent as any."

PALM SUNDAY was a warm spring day. On his wash-stand he found three gold florins which Bertoldo said would be left for him each week by Lorenzo's secretary. He could not resist the temptation of showing off to his family. On his bed he laid out another new outfit: embroidered blouse, surcoat with silver buckles, wine-coloured stockings.

In the street he met Torrigiani, who stopped and seized his arm. "I want to talk to you. Alone."

"Why alone? We have no secrets."

"We shared confidences, until you moved into the palace."

There was no mistaking the envy behind Torrigiani's outburst. Michelangelo spoke gently, hoping to placate him.

"But you live in your own palace, Torrigiani."

"Yes, and I don't have to play cheap tricks like knocking out a faun's teeth to ingratiate myself with the Medici."

"You sound jealous."

"Of what! Of an insufferable, solemn prig, setting down charcoal lines with his grimy hands?"

"But good charcoal lines," protested Michelangelo.

Torrigiani went purple in the face. "Are you implying that mine are not?"

"Why do you always bring a discussion back to yourself? You're not the centre of the universe."

"I was to you, until your head got swollen."

Michelangelo stared at him in amazement. "You were never the centre of my universe."

He turned and ran down the street.

His new clothes were not a success. His father felt hurt, as though the finery was a reproach to him. He gazed at the gold florins without comment, but Lucrezia bussed him happily on both cheeks. "Now tell me! Do the palace cooks use zedoary? What of their famous sole cooked with banana strips and pine nuts?"

"Forgive me, *madre mia,* I don't know."

She shook her head in despair.

Then the rest of the family assembled and wanted to hear the news. "How do the Medici treat you?" Lodovico said. *"Il Magnifico?"*

"Well."

"Piero?"

"He is arrogant; it is his nature."

"Giovanni, the cardinal-to-be?"

"He treats all alike. As though each meeting were the first."

Lodovico said: "Piero's attitude will prevail: you are in the palace as a humble workman." He eyed the three gold coins Michelangelo had placed on the desk before him. "What are they? A gift? A wage?"

"Bertoldo said it was a weekly allowance."

His Uncle Francesco could not contain his delight. "Splendid! We can rent a stall. Michelangelo, you will be a partner."

"No!" Lodovico's face was red. "We are not the poor."

"This is not charity." Michelangelo was indignant. "I work from light to dark."

"A gift is a whim. Next week there may be nothing!"

The three florins were more than Lodovico would earn in months at the customs: Michelangelo realized that he had seemed to be bragging. With his head on his chest, Lodovico went on, "Think how many millions of florins the Medici must have if they can give a fifteen-year-old student three of them each week." Then, with a quick movement, he swept them into the top drawer of his desk.

"Art is a vice," Lionardo announced pontifically.

"But, Lionardo, our churches are filled with art!" Michelangelo said.

"We have been led astray by the devil. A church is not a fair; people must go to pray, not to see a play painted on the walls."

Lodovico exclaimed: "Now I have two fanatics on my hands."

He left the room, followed by the whole family except for Lionardo and Monna Alessandra. Michelangelo too wanted to leave; the day had been a disappointment. But Lionardo would not let him go. He moved into an attack on Lorenzo and the Plato Academy as pagans, enemies of the Church.

"I have heard no irreverence," Michelangelo said placatingly. "Lorenzo is a reformer; he wants to cleanse the Church."

"Cleanse! Only a toady like yourself would be unable to see that Lorenzo is a debauched man and a tyrant."

Before Michelangelo could reply, Monna Alessandra said, "He has kept Florence from civil war! For years we destroyed each other, family against family, neighbourhood against neighbourhood, with blood flowing in the streets. Now, because of the Medici, we are a unified people."

Lionardo refused to answer his grandmother. "Michelangelo, this is my farewell to you. I leave tonight, to join Savonarola in San Marco."

"Then Savonarola has arrived? Lorenzo invited him."

"A Medici lie! Why should Lorenzo summon him, when Savonarola intends to destroy the Medici? I leave this house as Savonarola left his family in Ferrara: with only a shirt on my back. I shall pray for you in my cell until there is no skin left on my knees."

ONE DAY the following week, a groom knocked on the door of his room.

"His Excellency, Piero de' Medici, commands Michelangelo Buonarroti to present himself in His Excellency's ante-room."

Michelangelo thought, "How different from his father, who asks if it would give me pleasure to join him"

He followed the groom to Piero's ante-room. Piero's wife, Alfonsina, in grey damask embroidered with jewels, was sitting on a purple throne chair. Piero pretended he had not heard Michelangelo enter. His back to his guest, he was studying a bone tabernacle decorated with painted stories of Christ. Finally he turned and said: "Michelangelo, I wish my wife's portrait sculptured in marble."

"Thank you, Excellency," replied Michelangelo, "but I cannot carve portraits. The likeness would never satisfy you."

"Michelangelo, I *order* you to carve my wife in marble!"

Alfonsina said, "Please discuss this in your own room."

Angrily Piero opened a door and stalked through, Michelangelo following. Looking at Piero's statues and paintings, he exclaimed:

"Your Excellency has superb taste in the arts!"

"When I want your opinion I shall ask for it. Meanwhile explain why you think you are better than our other hirelings."

Michelangelo forced himself to reply politely. "I am a sculptor, resident in this palace at your father's request."

"We have a hundred tradesmen dependent upon us. What they are told to do, they do. You will commence tomorrow morning. And see that the statue of Her Excellency is beautiful."

"Not even the greatest sculptor could do that."

Piero's eyes flashed. "You . . . peasant! Pack your rags and go!"

Michelangelo went to his room and began collecting his things. There was a knock and Contessina entered with her nurse. "I hear you have refused to carve Alfonsina's portrait," she said.

"I refused."

"Would you refuse if my father asked you to do his portrait?" Michelangelo was silent. Refuse Lorenzo, for whom he felt so deep an affection? "Would you refuse," she went on, "if *I* asked?"

He was trapped.

"But Piero did not ask me. He ordered me."

Then Lorenzo came into the room, his eyes snapping. "I will not have this happen in my house," he said. "I asked your father to cede you to me. I am responsible for you."

Michelangelo's eyes blazed. "I have no apologies to offer."

"I am not asking for apologies. You came here as one of the family. No one may order you out of your own home."

Michelangelo's knees went weak.

Lorenzo spoke more gently. "But you, too, have much to learn. . . . Do not rush back here every time you are offended, and start packing your possessions. That is not loyal to me."

Michelangelo was trying to hold back the tears. "I owe His Excellency an apology. I was unkind about his wife."

"He owes you one."

Contessina lagged behind to whisper: "Make it up with Piero. He can cause a lot of trouble."

HE HAD worked enough now to try a theme. He remembered the Madonnas of the Rucellai chapel in Santa Maria Novella and felt again his love for his mother, his sense of loss, his hunger for her love. With Lorenzo he made a tour of the palace to examine many Medici Madonnas. In Lorenzo's bedroom they stood before Botticelli's "Madonna of the Magnificat."

Michelangelo was silent. When he thought of his mother he saw her as a beautiful young woman, as the young woman in the painting was beautiful; yet it was a different beauty, coming from within. Not a woman desirable to all men, as was Botticelli's; but one who would love a son and be loved by him. He said: "I feel close to the Madonna. She is the only image I have of my mother. Now I must search out what I'm trying to say about her."

He went into the poorer parts of town where the women worked on the pavements in front of their houses, weaving cane chair seats or wine-bottle covers, their babes on their laps. He watched the farmers' wives round Settignano who gave no second thought to his drawing them while they bathed or suckled their young. He was not looking for portraiture, but for the spirit of motherhood.

Sketching, he mused about the character and fate of Mary. The Annunciation was a favourite theme of Florentine painters; but in all the paintings he remembered, the Archangel Gabriel's message seemed to come to Mary as a complete surprise, as if she had been given no choice. But could that be? Could so important a task have been forced on Mary without her knowledge or consent? Since God must have loved Mary above all women to choose her, must He not have told her His plan, related every step of the way from Bethlehem to Calvary? And in His wisdom and mercy have allowed her the opportunity to reject it?

He decided that he would carve Mary at the agonizing moment of decision, while suckling her infant, when, knowing all that was to come, she must determine the future. Now that he understood what he was about, at last he was able to draw. Mary must be heroic in stature, a woman with the inner force and intelligence for decision. He reviewed the hundreds of sketches he had made in the past months: in figure, Mary could be a composite of these strong Tuscan mothers. But how did one portray her face? His memory of his own mother had a dream-like quality.

He put the drawings aside. To conceive this piece of sculpture he must know the marble from which it would draw its sustenance. With Granacci he set out to visit the stone shops of the city; but they failed to turn up the Carrara block for which he was searching. "Let's try the Settignano yards," he said.

In a yard there, he saw a piece that captivated him at once. It was of modest size, but gleaming white. He tested it for cracks, flaws, bubbles, stains. "This is the one, Granacci," he cried with glee. "It will hold my Madonna and Child. But I'll have to see it by the first rays of sunlight."

"If you think I'm going to stay here until dawn"

"No, no, you settle the price. Then I'll borrow a horse from the Topolinos for you and you can go home at once."

He slept at the Topolinos' and was standing over his marble when the fingers of dawn came over the hills. The block had no flaw, no discoloration; the crystals flickered brilliantly on its surface.

The word "marble" came from a Greek word meaning "shining stone." How his block glistened as he set it up on his wooden bench! He had lived with it for several months now, come to understand its nature. He knew every layer, every crystal.

He picked up his hammer and *subbia* and began cutting with the *colpo vivo*, the live blow, his passage handled in one "Go!" He was not working from his drawings or clay models; they had all been put away. He was carving from the images in his mind.

He was at work in his shed when he received a visit from Giovanni de' Medici, the fifteen-year-old near-cardinal. Though he was totally unblessed with looks, his expression was intelligent and alert. With him was his cousin Giulio; handsome, trouble-loving, and cold and hard as a corpse. Recognized as a Medici by Lorenzo, but despised by Piero because he was illegitimate, Giulio had made a place for himself by attaching himself to fat, good-natured Giovanni, providing his pleasures and doing his work.

"I came to invite you to join my hunt," said Giovanni.

Michelangelo had heard about the hunt. Hunters, horsemen and grooms had been sent to the mountains which abounded with hares, stags and wild boar, and an area had been enclosed by sailcloth. Peasants kept the game from breaching the cloth fence. "Forgive me," Michelangelo said, "I am in the marble, and cannot leave."

Giovanni looked crestfallen. "How very odd. You want only to work? You have no room for diversion?"

"For me, marble has the excitement of the hunt."

"You would really prefer your work to my hunt?"

"Since you give me a choice, yes."

Giovanni and Giulio moved off without a further word.

Michelangelo returned to his carving, the incident going out of his mind. But that evening Contessina whispered to him: "Giovanni's hunt is his supreme effort of the year. For a few hours he is the head of the family; even my father defers to him. If you reject his hunt you reject Giovanni. He is so kind; why should you want to hurt him?"

"I don't want to hurt him, Contessina. It's just that I want to carve all day, every day, until I'm finished."

She cried, "You've already made an enemy of Piero! Must you do the same to Giovanni?"

He could think of nothing to answer.

ON THE left of his design was a flight of stone steps. Mary was seated in profile on a bench to the right, the stone balustrade giving the illusion of ending in her lap, just under her child's knee. He saw that if her strong hand, holding the child securely, were to open more widely, it could be holding firmly not only her son but also the bottom of the balustrade, which would become an upright beam. Mary would then support on her lap both Jesus and the cross on which He would be crucified. But where was the transverse bar? The boy John, the cousin of Jesus, was playing on top of the steps. If he threw John's plump arm across the balustrade at a right angle, the boy's body and right arm would form the living cross-beam.

Bringing out the figures involved long hours and longer days. The birth of substance could not be hastened. Finally, with the carving of two other children playing above the stairs, his Madonna and Child was finished and he began the polishing. Bertoldo hammered into him the evils of "overlicking," which made a piece sentimental. He used a rasp on the rough surfaces, then a fine-grain emery stone with water to give his work a tactile quality. Next he used light-weight pumice to expose fresh, sparkling crystals. Slowly the highlights emerged: on the Madonna's face, on the curls, cheek and shoulder of the child, on the drapery

covering the Madonna's leg, on John's back, on the inside of the balustrade. All the rest was in shadow. Now one felt the crisis, the emotion on Mary's face as she felt the tug of her child at her breast and the weight of the cross in her hand.

Lorenzo summoned the Plato Academy scholars to examine the Madonna. They studied it, searching, pondering. Then, one by one, they turned to Michelangelo with pride in their eyes. Lorenzo gave him a purse of gold florins as a completion prize so that he might travel and study other art works, and he rushed home at once, despite the lateness of the hour. Everyone was asleep, but they quickly gathered round him, each carrying a candle, their night-caps askew. Michelangelo spilt out the golden coins in a dramatic sweep across his father's desk.

"My prize money," he exclaimed.

"It's a lot," exclaimed his uncle. "How much?"

". . . thirty, forty, fifty," counted his father. "Enough to support the family in ease for half a year. Michelangelo, you must start on another piece immediately." No word of thanks; only joy at the pile of gold pieces shimmering in the candlelight. . . . "We'll look for another farm," Lodovico went on. "Land is the only safe investment."

"I'm not sure I can let you do that, Father. *Il Magnifico* gave me the money for travel: to see sculptures."

"Travel to see sculptures!" Lodovico was aghast. "You look, you leave, the money is gone. But with farms"

Buonarroto asked, "Are you really going travelling?"

"No," said Michelangelo. "I want only to work." He turned to Lodovico. "They're yours, Father."

SEVERAL TIMES a week Bertoldo insisted that they go to the churches to draw from the masters. They were sketching in the Brancacci chapel when Torrigiani set his stool so close to Michelangelo that his shoulder pressed against Michelangelo's arm. Michelangelo moved his stool. Torrigiani was offended.

"I can't draw without a free arm," explained Michelangelo.

"What are you so cranky about? We've drawn these frescoes fifty times. What more is there to learn?"

"How to draw like the great Masaccio."

"I want to draw like Torrigiani. That's good enough for me."

Michelangelo barked impatiently. "But not good enough for me."

Torrigiani said with a crooked smile. "I'm surprised the favourite student still has to submit to these schoolboy exercises."

"This is a schoolboy exercise only to a schoolboy mind."

Torrigiani flared up. "Oh, so now your mind is better than mine. Why, you can't do anything but draw. You don't know how little you are alive. It's as they say: little man, little life; big man, big life."

"Big man, big wind."

Torrigiani was furious. "You meant that as an insult!"



Alinari photo

The Madonna of the Stairs

He sprang from his stool and yanked Michelangelo to his feet. Michelangelo had barely time to see the grim set of Torrigiani's expression. Then Torrigiani's fist hit the bridge of his nose with the sound of powder exploding. He tasted blood and crushed bone; and then, as from a distance, heard Bertoldo's anguished cry. While stars burst in a black heaven, he slipped to his knees and lost consciousness.

He awakened in his bed in the palace, his head a mass of pain. Bending over him were Dr. Leoni, Lorenzo's physician, Lorenzo and Bertoldo. He heard someone say: "Torrigiani has fled the city, Excellency."

"Send riders after him. I'll lock him in the stocks."

The doctor began exploring Michelangelo's face with his fingers.

"The bridge of the nose is crushed. The bone splinters may take a year to work their way out. The passage is completely closed now. Later, if he's lucky, he'll be able to breath through it again." He slipped an arm under Michelangelo and pressed a cup to his lips. "Drink. It will put you to sleep. When you wake the pain will be less."

He gulped down the draught painfully. When he woke again he was

alone in the room. The pain had localized and he felt the throbbing behind his eyes and nose. He got out of bed, using the side of the wash-table to steady himself. Then, summoning courage, he looked in the mirror. He could barely recognize himself; Torrigiani's big fist had thrown his whole face out of focus. He crawled back to bed on hands and knees, sick at heart.

He heard the door open. Unwilling to see anyone, he remained motionless. A hand pulled back the cover from his head, and he gazed up at Contessina.

"Michelangelo *mio*."

"Contessina."

"I'm sorry it happened."

"I blame myself. I taunted him." He felt hot tears stinging his eyes as he forced himself to say the words: "I'm ugly."

Her face had been close to his as they spoke. Now she placed her lips on the swollen bridge of his nose, and he felt their warmth like a balm. Then she was gone from the room.

THE SWELLING receded, the discoloration faded; but he was still unable to face the world in this mutilated form. He slipped out late at night to walk the silent streets of Florence. Torrigiani had not been caught, and probably never would be.

Poliziano, of the Plato Academy, one of the ugliest of men, came to the room one day. His face glowed as he said, "Michelangelo, I have just completed my translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. While I was translating the story of the centaurs I thought what a fine carving you could make of the battle between the centaurs and the Thessalians." He put his manuscript into Michelangelo's hands. "Read it," he said. "I thought of you carving the scenes even while I translated them."

When he left, Michelangelo began reading the translation. He began to see pictures in his mind: of struggles between men and centaurs, of the rescue of women, of the wounded, the dying. But how could one carve this legend? It would require a piece of marble the size of a mountain. Nor could a sculptor show all the weapons used in the mythological battle: torches, spears, javelins, tree trunks. Then he recalled an early line and leafed back through the pages: *Aphareus . . . lifted a sheet of rock ripped from the mountainside. . . .* Here could be the unifying

theme! Since one could not portray all weapons he would use only the earliest, most universal: stone.

As he stretched himself out to sleep, he realized that all evening he had not once thought of his nose. He had been thinking only of the Battle of the Centaurs. "Glory be to God," he thought. "I'm cured."

Next day he walked to Settignano. The Topolinos greeted him casually, pleased that he would spend the night. They did not seem to notice his damaged face.

At dawn, he made his way over the ox road to the quarries, where the stonemasons began work an hour after sunrise. The *pietra serena* cut the afternoon before was a turquoise blue while the older blocks were taking on a beige tone. The quarrymen and masons were already forging and tempering their tools. They greeted Michelangelo jovially. "Come to do an honest day's work, eh? Once a stonemason always a stonemason."

"In this weather?" quipped Michelangelo. "I'm going to sit under a tree and never pick up anything heavier than a stick of charcoal."

It was hot in the quarries, and the masons worked in breech-clout, straw hat and leather sandals. Michelangelo sat watching them. Their wiry, sweating bodies shone and glistened like polished marble as they cut and lifted the stone. They were completely unselfconscious as Michelangelo sketched them, seeking the strength that lay buried in their indestructible bodies.

When the sun was high overhead several boys appeared, carrying long branches with a row of nails in them; hanging from each nail was a basket with a man's dinner. The masons gathered in their "hall", a cave at the base of the mountain which remained the same temperature the year round, and shared their vegetable soup, boiled meat, bread, cheese and wine with Michelangelo. Then they lay down for an hour's sleep. While they slept he drew them again: sprawled out on the ground, hats over their faces, their bodies quiet, recuperative.

Back in Florence, he found the block of marble he wanted and started working it. Then, one morning as he left the palace, a monk stopped him, handed him a letter, and disappeared as soundlessly as he had appeared. The note was from his brother Lionardo, pleading with him to abandon the pagan theme of the centaurs, which could put his soul in jeopardy. If he must carve graven images, they should be ones sanctified by the Church.

"The battle of the centaurs is an evil story," Lionardo concluded, "told to you by a perverted man. Renounce it and return to Christ."

Michelangelo shook his head. How could Lionardo, buried in a monastery, know what he was carving, or about Poliziano? He was a little frightened at how much the monks inside San Marco knew of everyone's business.

He showed the letter to Lorenzo. "If my carving this theme can do you harm," he said, "perhaps I ought to change it?"

Lorenzo seemed weary. Bringing Savonarola to Florence had been a mistake. "Savonarola is trying to cow us, to impose his rigid censorship. If we give in now it will be easier for him to win next time. Continue your work."

ON SATURDAY nights the palace emptied, as the Medici family began their social rounds. According to rumour, Lorenzo sought pleasure with his group of young bloods, in orgies of drinking and love-making. On such evenings Michelangelo had supper with Contessina and sometimes Giuliano, her younger brother. As they ate cold water-melon and chatted, he sketched the Battle of the Centaurs and told Contessina that all twenty figures in the work would represent facets of man's nature, animal and human, each attempting to destroy the other parts.

"I once heard you say that behind a carving there must be worship. What will there be to worship in this Battle?"

"The supreme work of art: the male body."

"I can blackmail you for your pagan worship of the body of man," Contessina said facetiously. "Savonarola would have you burnt as a heretic."

"I do not worship man, Contessina. I worship God for creating man."

They laughed, their heads close. Their intimacy permeated the room. Suddenly Contessina's eyes moved to the door and her head came up sharply. He turned and saw Lorenzo, standing silent, his lips compressed.

"We were . . . discussing"

Lorenzo came forward to look at the drawings.

"Giulio reports your meetings to me. Your friendship is good. It is important that artists have friends. And Medici as well."

A few nights later when the moon was full and the air stirring with wild scents, they sat together in a library window seat.

"Florence is full of magic in the moonlight," Contessina sighed. "I wish I could look down from a height and see it all."

"I know a place," he exclaimed. "Just across the river."

"We could slip out of the back garden, separately."

They met and set out for the Arno, crossing it and climbing up to the ancient Belvedere fort to sit on the stone parapet. Michelangelo pointed out the glistening white Baptistery, Duomo and Campanile; the golden, high-towered Signoria; and on their side of the river the moonlit Pitti palace. Caught up in the beauty of the city, their fingers fumbled towards each other on the rough stone; touched and interlocked.

IT WAS shortly afterwards that Lorenzo summoned him to his office. Michelangelo did not need to be told why he had been sent for.

"She was safe, Excellency. By my side the whole time."

"Did you really think you would not be observed?"

Miserable now, Michelangelo replied, "It was indiscreet. But it was so beautiful up there."

"I am not questioning your conduct, Michelangelo, but its wisdom. You know that Florence is a city of wicked tongues."

"They would not speak evil of a young girl."

Lorenzo studied Michelangelo's face a moment. "Contessina is growing up. That is all, Michelangelo, you may return to work."

"Is there anything I can do to make amends?"

Lorenzo put both hands on the boy's trembling shoulders. "You meant no wrong. Now, at dinner, there is someone you should meet."

That night he met Gianfrancesco Aldovrandi of Bologna. He told Michelangelo of Bologna's great sculptors. "It is my hope," he said, "that you will come to Bologna to see their work. A visit there could have a profound influence on you."

Michelangelo wanted to reply that profound influences were precisely what he wished to avoid; but Aldovrandi would prove to be a prophet.

During the ensuing days Michelangelo heard that Piero and Alfonsina had protested against "a commoner being allowed to associate on intimate terms with a Medici." "If some decision is not taken about Contessina," they added, "we may regret it."

Several nights later he learned that Contessina had been sent for a visit to the villa of the Ridolfi family.

HIS FATHER was concerned about Lionardo, who had been reported ill in the monastery at San Marco. "Couldn't you use your Medici connections to get in to see him?" asked Lodovico. But Michelangelo found that no outsider was allowed in the monks' quarters.

Then he learned that Savonarola would preach in San Marco the following Sunday. He took up a position at the door to the cloister, so that Lionardo would have to pass him; but the monks' cowls were pulled so far forward that their faces were buried.

Savonarola mounted the pulpit, a slight figure under his robe, his head and face deep in his Dominican cowl. Michelangelo could see little but a pair of dark veiled eyes. His voice was commanding as he spoke of the corruption of the priesthood. Most priests were put into the Church by their families for worldly gain; they sought only wealth and power, and were guilty of simony, of nepotism, bribery, selling the relics of the saints. "The adulteries of the Church," he cried, "have filled the world!"

Savonarola pushed back the cowl and revealed his face. His upper lip was thin and ascetic; the lower voluptuous. He had flashing black eyes, high-boned, hollow cheeks and a jutting nose. "O Italy," he cried, "O Rome, O Florence, your villainies are bringing us tribulation! Give up your pomps and shows! O priests! Your worship is to spend your nights with harlots, your days gossiping in the sacristies. 'I will descend on you in . . . your wickedness . . .' says the Lord. Italy will feel God's wrath. Blood will run in the streets. Unless ye repent! repent! repent!"

The cry of "Repent!" echoed a hundredfold as Savonarola pulled his hood forward, came down the pulpit stairs and went out of the cloister door. Michelangelo felt deeply moved, a little sick.

Later he received a note from Lionardo asking him to come to San Marco. He found the cloister beautiful and tranquil; the grass freshly cut, the hedges trimmed.

Lionardo seemed to Michelangelo as cadaverous as Savonarola.

"The family has been worried about your health."

Lionardo's head shrank deeper into the cowl. "My family is the family of God." Then he spoke with affection. "I called for you because I know you have not been corrupted by the palace. In the midst of Sodom and Gomorrah, you have lived like an anchorite."

Amused, Michelangelo asked, "How do you know these things?"

"We know everything that goes on in Florence. Fra Savonarola has had a vision. The Medici and all their obscene, godless art works will be destroyed; but you can still save yourself. Forsake them while there is still time. There are to be nineteen sermons, starting on All Saints' Day, through to Epiphany. By the end of them, Florence and the Medici will be in flames."

Michelangelo was shocked into silence.

"You won't save yourself?" implored Lionardo.

"If my soul is to be saved, it can only be through sculpture. That is my faith, and my discipline. You say I live like an anchorite; it is my work that keeps me that way. We both serve God."

Lionardo's eyes burnt into Michelangelo's. Then he was gone.

CONTESSINA had returned. She came to Michelangelo, who was sketching in the library, her face ashen. He jumped up. "Contessina, are you ill?"

"I have something to tell you." She sank into a chair. "The contracts have been drawn for my marriage to Piero Ridolfi."

After an instant he asked brusquely, "Why should it affect me? Everyone knows Medici daughters are given in political marriages."

"I don't know why it should affect you, Michelangelo, any more than it should affect me."

He met her eyes squarely. "Forgive me. I was hurt. The marriage . . . when is it?"

"I asked for another year. I am too young."

"Will Ridolfi make you happy? Is he fond of you?"

"We do not discuss such matters. I will do what I must. But my feelings are my own." She rose and went close to him: he saw tears sparkling in her eyes. He reached out his hand, and they locked their fingers. Then she withdrew, leaving behind only her faint mimosa scent.

SAVONAROLA continued his impassioned sermons against the vices of his time, predicting the downfall of the Medici and of the Pope. Women wept to hear him, and the whole city was soon shaken by religious upheaval.

The first defection in the sculpture garden was a fun-loving apprentice called Baccio. He fell silent for hours, then began disappearing

for a day or two at a time. Soon he was criticizing the Medici and extolling Savonarola. One day he joined Savonarola's friars.

Savonarola's sermons were now attracting such large crowds that he transferred his activities to the cathedral, where Florentines stood packed together. Because of rigid fasting, and penance on his knees, the friar could barely summon the strength to mount the pulpit stairs. He had completely identified himself now with Christ. "I do not speak with my own tongue but that of God. . . . I am His voice on earth."

A cold shiver ran through his listeners. Michelangelo gazed up at the Donatello and Della Robbia carvings of children singing, dancing, laughing in joyous love of life. For Michelangelo, the marble cried out, "People are good!" while Savonarola was thundering, "Humanity is evil!"

The city council invited Savonarola to address them in their great hall. All the Medici and their household were present. When Savonarola first attacked Lorenzo as a tyrant, Michelangelo saw Lorenzo's lips lift in a faint smile. But the smile vanished as Savonarola mounted his attack, and Michelangelo began listening intently. Savonarola charged Lorenzo with confiscating the Florentine Dower Fund, money paid into the city treasury by poor families as guarantee that they would have the dowry without which no Florentine girl could hope to marry; he had used the money to buy sacrilegious works of art, to stage bacchanals. Lorenzo, the corrupt tyrant, and the city council—the Signoria—itself must go. A new government must be installed to make Florence a City of God. And who would govern Florence? Savonarola. God had ordered it.

Hysteria now began to rise in Florence. Few dared attend the lectures of the Plato Academy. Printers refused to print anything the friar did not approve. Botticelli deserted to Savonarola, declaring his own paintings of nudes to be lewd and lascivious. Michelangelo approved Savonarola's crusade for political and religious reform; he disapproved only of his attacks on Lorenzo and the arts. When his brother Lionardo visited him to urge him again to destroy the Battle of the Centaurs, he put him gently but firmly in the street.

Bertoldo, on the other hand, said querulously that the Battle of the Centaurs showed Savonarola's influence: it was bare, lacked richness.

He had planned to do weeks of polishing. Instead he asked Granacci to help him move the block into the palace at once. They carried it to Lorenzo's sitting-room. Lorenzo, who was ill, came into the room, hobbling painfully with a cane. "Ah!" he exclaimed, and dropped into a chair, studying the sculpture silently section by section. Finally he said, "I can feel every body, every crushed bone. It's unlike anything I've seen."

"We've already had an offer for the piece; Savonarola would offer it up to God on a bonfire. I answered that I was not free to give it. It belonged to Lorenzo de' Medici."

"The marble is yours," Lorenzo said.

"Excellency, I had already offered it to God. The God who created man in His own image of goodness, strength and beauty."

Lorenzo rose abruptly, walked about the room. "Michelangelo, the arts of each age are broken and burnt by the next. The Florentines are a fickle people; if they follow Savonarola to the end of his road, the arts in Florence will be wiped out. We will slip back into darkness." He paused, then said, "Come with me. There is something I must show you."

They went to the church of San Lorenzo, where generations of Medici were buried. "The last great work of art I must complete for my family," Lorenzo said, "is a marble façade here, with twenty figures in its niches."

"Twenty figures!" Michelangelo did not know whether he felt joy or dismay. He cried, "I will do it, but I will need time. I still have so much to learn."

WHEN HE reached his room he found Bertoldo, wrapped in a blanket, crouching over a live-coal brazier. Michelangelo went quickly to his side. "Are you all right, Bertoldo?"

"No! I'm a stupid old man who has outworn his time. Tonight I looked at your Centaurs and remembered the things I said. I was wrong. You must forgive me."

"Let me put you to bed." He settled Bertoldo under a quilt, and went to get him a mug of warm wine. He held the silver cup to Bertoldo's lips. "If the Centaurs is good," he said, "it's because you taught me how to make it good. Tomorrow we will start a new piece, and you will teach me more."

"Yes, tomorrow . . ." sighed Bertoldo. "Are you sure, Michelangelo, there is a tomorrow?" and he dropped off to sleep.

In a few moments, his breathing became heavy, laboured. Michelangelo sent for Lorenzo's doctor, but the doctor could do nothing. The boy spent the night holding Bertoldo to let him breathe more easily; he died the next day. After the priest had given him Extreme Unction, he uttered his last words with a little smile. "Michelangelo, you are my heir—as I was Donatello's."

"Yes, Bertoldo. And I am proud."

"I want you to have my estate. . . . It will make you . . . rich . . . famous. My cookery-book."

"I shall always treasure it."

Bertoldo smiled again, as though they shared a joke, and closed his eyes for the last time.

Michelangelo had lost his master. There would never be another.

THE DISORGANIZATION of the garden was now complete. All work stopped, and there were no more meetings with the Plato scholars, for Lorenzo had decided that he must take a cure in his villa at Careggi. There he could lay his plans to fight Savonarola in a battle to the death. All the weapons were in Lorenzo's hands: wealth, power, friends in other great city-states; while Savonarola had nothing but the cloak on his back. Yet Savonarola, dedicated, incorruptible, had already effected reforms in the lives of the clergy and the rich Florentines. He seemed to have the upper hand.

Michelangelo was troubled by Lorenzo's approaching departure, for Piero would now be in command. Meantime, he was invited to see Giovanni invested as cardinal. That night, all Florence was entertained lavishly by the Medici. Two days later Michelangelo bade farewell to the new cardinal and his cousin Giulio, who was accompanying him to Rome, and gaiety left the palace. Lorenzo departed for Careggi.

TWO WEEKS later word came that Lorenzo was failing. The doctor had administered pulverized diamonds and pearls, but this hitherto infallible medicine had failed to help. Lorenzo had sent for Pico and Poliziano to read to him to ease his pain, and Piero had already left for Careggi, taking Contessina and Giuliano with him.

Michelangelo paced the corridors in an agony of apprehension. Finally, he mounted a horse and rode the four miles to Lorenzo's beautiful villa. There was a wailing coming from the kitchen as he softly climbed the broad staircase. He stood for an irresolute moment before Lorenzo's bedchamber, then slipped in and hid behind a wall-hanging by the door. Peeping out, he saw Lorenzo propped up in his high-bolstered bed; at its foot sat Poliziano, tears streaming down his face, and Pico, reading from a book. Soon Lorenzo's confessor entered and banished everyone from the bedside. He took Lorenzo's confession and gave him absolution; then Pico and Poliziano returned with a servant who fed Lorenzo a hot broth. Poliziano asked:

"How are you relishing your food, *Magnifico*?"

Michelangelo saw a smile light Lorenzo's tired features.

"As a dying man always does," he replied cheerfully.

Piero came in and stood by the bedside, his head bowed.

Lorenzo said: "Piero, my son, you will possess the same authority that I have had. Florence is a republic, and it will not be possible for you to please everyone. Pursue that course of conduct which strict integrity prescribes. Consult the interests of the whole community. If you will do so, you will protect both Florence and the Medici."

Piero kissed his father on the forehead. Then, to Michelangelo's amazement, Savonarola hurried into the room. "You sent for me, Lorenzo de' Medici?"

"I did, Fra Savonarola. I wish to die in charity with all."

"Then I exhort you to hold the faith."

"I have always held it firmly."

"Finally, I urge you to endure death with fortitude."

"Give me your blessing, Father," Lorenzo said hoarsely.

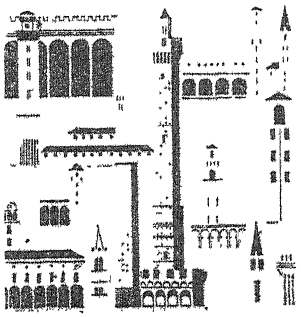
Savonarola lowered his head, recited the prayers for the dying, blessed Lorenzo, and departed.

Next, Lorenzo sent for his servants. He bade them farewell and asked their forgiveness if he had ever offended them. Michelangelo strove with all his might not to run to Lorenzo's side, drop to his knees and cry, "I, too, have loved you! Bid me farewell!" He had not been summoned here. And so he buried his face in the rough undersurface of the velvet hangings, even as Lorenzo fell back on his pillow and the doctor covered his face.

Michelangelo slipped out of the door, and ran down the stairs and into the garden. Lorenzo was dead! And why had he summoned Savonarola, his avowed destroyer?

Michelangelo knew only that he had lost his greatest friend.

BOOK FOUR
The Flight



He knew Piero did not want him at the palace; he moved back home and shared his former bed with his brother Buonarroto. Granacci wanted him to finish his apprenticeship to Ghirlandaio. But he knew that he could not go back to painting. He would lose all that he had learned of sculpture over the past three years.

He found that Buonarroto, who kept the account book, was holding enough from his palace savings to buy a piece of marble. "You must back me in a lie to Father," he said. "I shall tell him that I have a commission, and that they are paying a few scudi while I work. I'll give him some of my savings. And I shall say that I have the right to resign the commission, to protect myself if I can't sell the statue."

The single desire of Michelangelo's heart rose out of love and sorrow: to do a memorial to Lorenzo, expressing the courage, knowledge and understanding of this great leader.

Lorenzo had often spoken of Hercules, suggesting that the legends about his twelve "labours" should not be taken literally. Hercules's feats perhaps were symbols for the near-impossible tasks with which each new generation was faced. Had not Lorenzo laboured like a Hercules against ignorance and intolerance? His Lorenzo must be heroic, larger than life size. But where could he find such a huge marble block?

He went to the stone-yard of the cathedral where a bald, pink-faced foreman, who said his name was Beppe, asked if he could be of service. Michelangelo introduced himself as a former apprentice in the Medici garden. "I need a large marble," he said, "but I have little money.

Would the city be willing to sell me something? That big column, for instance?"

"The Board of Works bought that for Duccio to carve a Hercules. It's seventeen feet high. Duccio ordered it blocked out in the quarry. They ruined it."

Michelangelo ran his fingers over the enormous block. "Would the Board of Works sell it?"

"Not possible. They speak of using it one day."

"Then what about this smaller one?" Michelangelo indicated a nine-foot block. "And would you arrange the price for me?"

The foreman gave him a toothless grin. "Never yet knew a stone-carver with tomorrow's *pasta* money in today's purse. I'll ask them. Come back tomorrow."

Beppe did a good job for him. "I told them it was an ugly piece of meat and we'd be glad of the room. How about five florins?"

Michelangelo counted out the money joyfully.

Now he had to find a workshop. Nostalgia drew him to the Medici garden. It was unused since Lorenzo's death, the summer grass high, the little casino stripped bare. He thought, "Perhaps Piero would let me work in my old shed if I told him what I was carving." But he could not make himself go to Piero.

As he turned to leave, he saw Contessina and Giuliano coming from the Piazza San Marco. Contessina's face was sallow, but under her wide hat her brown eyes were enormously alive. Giuliano said: "Why haven't you come to see us?"

Contessina's voice was reproachful. "You could have called."

"But Piero"

"I too am a Medici. So is Giuliano." She was angry. "The palace is our home. Our friends are welcome."

"I have not been invited."

"I invite you," she cried. "Giovanni has been here, but he must go to Rome. Pope Innocent is dying, and Giovanni must try to protect us against a Borgia being elected Pope." She looked out at the garden. "Giuliano and I have walked over here nearly every day. We thought you would be working."

"I have not permision to work here."

"I shall secure it for you."

For four days he waited patiently in the garden, but she did not come. Then, on the fifth day, she came through the main gate with her old nurse. Her eyes were red. "I have asked Piero a hundred times," she said, "but he remains silent. That is his way. Then it can never be said that he refused."

"I was afraid it would be so, Contessina."

She moved so close that their lips were only inches apart. The nurse turned away. "Piero says the Ridolfi family will be displeased if I see you again; until after my marriage, at least."

Neither of them moved closer, their slight young bodies did not touch; yet he felt himself held and holding in an embrace.

Contessina and the nurse disappeared into the piazza.

BEPPE CAME to his rescue. "I'll tell the Board I can use a part-time man, that you offer to work for no pay. For free a Tuscan refuses nothing. Set up your shop along the wall."

So Michelangelo set up a forge, and, with chestnut wood and Swedish iron, fashioned a set of chisels and hammers.

Now he was ready to begin. But how could he convey Lorenzo's Herculean accomplishments? He must be shown as the strongest man who ever walked the earth. Where in Tuscany, land of small, lean men, would he find such a model? He scoured Florence, looking at coopers, blacksmiths, stone-bevellers, porters. Then he returned to his workshop; sketched, modelled . . . and was dissatisfied. He thought, "I can achieve nothing but surface sculpture, outlines of bones, a few muscles brought into play. What do I know of the vital inner structure of a man?"

He knew what he must do. He must learn anatomy. He must train himself through dissection until he knew the workings of the human body, in every bone, muscle, tendon. But how could he dissect? Become a surgeon? That would take years.

Could he find corpses then? He thought, which dead in Florence were unwatched, unwanted? Only the very poor, the wandering beggars who were taken to church hospitals when they were sick. And the church with the largest charity hospital was Santo Spirito, whose prior, Father Nicola Bichiellini, had grown up in Michelangelo's own neighbourhood! He had often allowed Michelangelo to read in his

library, and had given him a key which unlocked all the outside gates.

Could he ask Prior Bichiellini for his unclaimed corpses? If the prior were caught, he would be excommunicated. But this was a man who, when he thought he was right, knew not fear.

He wandered round and through Santo Spirito, checking entrances, approaches to the rooms where bodies were kept overnight for morning burial. Then he went to see the prior, who greeted him heartily, his sparkling blue eyes enormous behind magnifying lenses. He had been a great athlete; at fifty his hair was shot with grey, but his body was charged with vitality. He let Michelangelo recite only a part of his proposal.

"Enough!" he said. "You have never brought this subject up. It has vanished like smoke, leaving no trace."

Stunned by this rapid rejection, Michelangelo was about to leave when the prior added, "Michelangelo, I thought of you when we received a new book with figure drawings from the fourth century. Would you like to see it?"

Michelangelo followed Bichiellini across the cloister and into his study. The prior reached into his desk and took out a long key which he laid across the book to keep the leaves spread. Then he said: "*Allora*, I have work to do. Come back again soon."

Michelangelo felt a warm glow: so he had been forgiven, the incident forgotten.

After that, he returned often to the library. Always the prior laid the same bronze key across a book—but never when others were present. Why? "It must mean something," Michelangelo realized finally. "How many doors are there in which I am interested? Only one. The dead-room door." If the key fitted that door

IT WAS midnight when he reached the monastery, having left his house noiselessly and taken a circuitous route to the hospital in order to miss the night guards.

He slipped through a little gate beneath a fresco of the Madonna, skirted the walls of the dark kitchen, his breath coming faster now, and darted down a corridor to the dead-room. An oil lamp stood in a niche. He took a candle out of the green canvas bag he carried, lit it and shielded it under his cape.

The bronze key did indeed unlock the door of the dead room He went in and locked the door behind him He did not know whether he dared face the task ahead

The room was small, windowless, with whitewashed walls Narrow planks, mounted on wooden horses, held a corpse, wrapped from head to foot in a burial sheet He leaned against the door, breathing hard, the candle shaking in his hand It was the first time he had been alone with the dead, let alone locked in, and on a sacrilegious errand Who lay wrapped in that sheet? What had he done that he should now be mutilated?

"What kind of nonsense is this?" he demanded of himself "What difference could it make to a man already dead? His body does not enter the kingdom of heaven, only his soul "

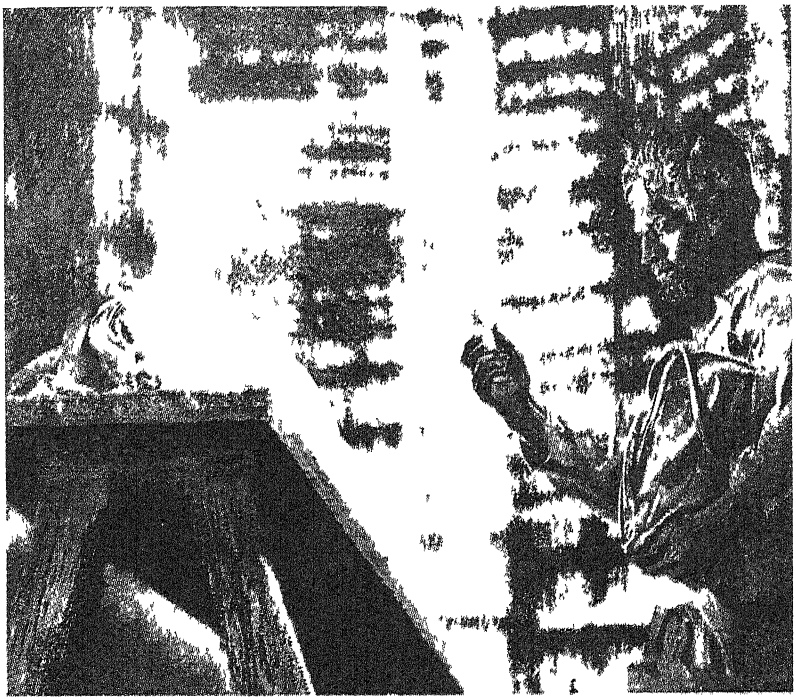
He put down his bag and set his candle—which would burn only three hours—on the floor It was important not only for light but as a clock, for he had to be safely out of here before the monks who operated the bake-house rose to make the day's bread. When the candle began sputtering he would have to leave

He emptied his bag of its scissors and kitchen knife, took off his cape, for he was already sweating in the cold room, uttered a short prayer and approached the corpse

The trestle bench was narrow. He wrestled with the stiff body, first raising the legs and pulling the sheet out from under its lower half, then lifting it from the waist and holding it against his chest until he could manoeuvre the cloth from the torso and head. The winding sheet was long; he had to go through the process five times He picked up his candle and studied the body His first feeling was one of pity His second was fear: *"This is how I shall end!"*

The face was expressionless; the mouth half open The man had been strongly built and was in mid-life when he had received a stab wound in the chest The cadaver had sunk to the temperature of this cold room There was an odour like very old flowers dying in water. It was not strong, but it remained in his nostrils from then on.

He propped his candle on the trestle, but it was a considerable time before he could pick up the knife, recall what he had read about the human body, the few illustrations he had seen Swallowing hard, he brought the knife down and made his first incision, studying the layer



of fat, then cutting deeper to observe the dark red fibres of the muscles. The smell seemed heavier now, and nausea started within him, but his disgust was overcome by excitement. He picked up his knife and began to dissect the chest. Suddenly the candle spluttered. Almost three hours! He could not believe it. He picked up the winding sheet. The wrapping process was a thousandfold more difficult than the unwrapping. Perspiration ran down into his eyes; his heart pounded so loudly he thought it would wake the monastery He had barely a moment to make sure that the corpse was stretched out upon the planks as he had found it before the candle flickered out.

He took a wandering route home, stopping repeatedly to retch. He washed his hands with lye soap, and got into bed, his body icy. He huddled against his brother, but not even Buonarroto's warmth could help him. He had chills and fever all the next day Lucrezia made a

chicken broth, but he could not hold it down; nothing could remove the smell of death.

About eleven at night he rose, dressed and made his way shakily to Santo Spirito. There was no corpse in the dead-room, then or on the following night.

On the third night he again found a body on the planked table. The second cadaver was older, with a white beard. This time he used his knife with more authority. Experimentally, he pressed a lung; a hissing noise came out of the corpse's mouth. He dropped the candle in fright. When he regained his calm, he realized that in touching the lung he had forced out the residual air; and for the first time he could see the connection between lungs and mouth.

Moving the lung, he found a dark red mass; this must be the heart, shaped something like an apple, almost free in the chest. He held it in his hands and, unexpectedly, he was hit by an emotional impact as strong as Hercules's club: now he was holding the most vital organ of the body. His candle began to sputter as he replaced the heart in its cavity. With great difficulty he rewrapped the corpse and ran home, emotionally exhausted.

He crept silently up the stairs of his house to find his father waiting for him. "Where have you been? What is that horrible odour? You smell like death."

Michelangelo mumbled an excuse, brushed past Lodovico to his bedroom. He could not sleep.

HE COULD not risk his father's again detecting the odour of death; so next time he found a wine-shop open in a workmen's quarter and drank a little Chianti. When the proprietor turned his back, he sprinkled the rest of his glass over his shirt.

Lodovico was outraged when he smelt the wine. "It is not enough that you wander the streets all night no doubt associating with loose women; now you come home smelling like a tavern. What is driving you to these evil ways?"

The only protection he could give his father was to let him believe he was carousing. But as the days passed, and Michelangelo stumbled into the house every morning towards dawn, the family rose in arms. Lucrezia was outraged because he was not eating, Francesco because he

was afraid Michelangelo would run into debt, his aunt on moral grounds.

But he persisted, learning slowly, painfully, the function of the facial muscles and how they could move the face in laughter or in tears. He studied the brain, looking at it in wonder and admiration. From this small organ, weighing no more than a couple of pounds, emerged the greatness of the human race: art, science, philosophy, government, all that men had become for good as well as evil.

Spring came, and one afternoon he went to Prior Bichiellini, casually laid the key on the book the prior was reading, and said, "I would like to carve something for the church."

The prior looked pleased, but not surprised. "We have need of a wooden crucifix for the central altar," he said.

Michelangelo had never even whittled, but if the prior wanted a Crucifixion in wood, then wood it must be. He was soon at work in the monastery carpenter's shop. The lay brothers there treated him like another carpenter. This suited him; he felt at home in the comfortable, sunny silence framed by the pleasant sounds of saw, plane and hammer.

He started re-reading the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark. The more he read, the more the terror-laden, agonized Crucifixions to be seen in the chapels of Florence receded from his mind, and into it came the hearty image of Prior Bichiellini: serving all humanity in God's name, with a great mind and noble spirit that gloried in living.

He started sketching those Crucifixions of the thirteenth century carved with the head and knees of Christ turned in the same direction, a design which suggested unquestioning acceptance. But did Christ feel only acceptance between the hour when the Roman soldier drove the first nail through His flesh, and the hour when He died?

As he sketched, he realized his own Christ must be twisted in conflict, torn by inner questioning, yet with a divine inner force strong enough to meet His hour of trial. He turned the head and knees in opposite directions, establishing the intense physical and spiritual conflict of a man pulled two ways. He carved his figure in walnut, sandpapered it down, and rubbed the surface with oil and wax. His fellow carpenters made no comment, but they stopped at his bench to observe. Nor did the prior discuss the figure's message. He said only: "It is what I envisioned for the altar. Thank you."

A HEAVY snowstorm left Florence a white city. Michelangelo was in his Duomo workshop, huddled over a brazier, when Piero's groom came to summon him to the palace.

He found the Medici children and grandchildren assembled in Lorenzo's study, a bright fire burning. It was Giuliano's birthday. Cardinal Giovanni, who had returned to Florence when a member of the hostile Borgia family was elected Pope, looked plumper than ever sitting in Lorenzo's chair, hovered over by his cousin Giulio, both in their gayest brocades and jewelled satins. Contessina, gowned in aquamarine and silver, seemed taller, her arms and shoulders filled out. Her eyes, when they met his, sparkled as brightly as the silver threads in her dress.

Piero smiled. "Michelangelo, we welcome you back to the palace. Today we must do everything that pleases Giuliano. The first thing he said this morning was, 'I would like to have the greatest snowman ever made.' And since you were our father's favourite sculptor"

His heart sank; but his crushed hopes seemed less painful when Giuliano cried: "Please do it for *me*, Michelangelo!" and Contessina added, "Do help us, Michelangelo! We'll all serve as your assistants."

Late that afternoon, when the last of the crowds had thronged through the palace grounds to see the hilariously grotesque snowman, Piero sat at his father's desk in the big office. "Why not move back into the palace, Michelangelo?" he said. "You would have the same privileges as when my father was alive."

Michelangelo gulped; he was almost eighteen now. Hardly an age to receive spending money left on his wash-stand. Yet it was a chance to get out of the drear Buonarroti house.

But at the palace, everything was different. The Plato Academy held its meetings elsewhere; the great ruling families of Italy, the merchant princes, the council men no longer filled the dinner table. They were replaced by entertainers and Piero's young sporting friends.

Settled in with his Hercules block, Michelangelo designed a compact figure bursting with power. His heroic block was Seravezza marble, quarried high in the Alps. After he had penetrated its weathered outer skin, its pure milky-white slivers behaved like a lump of sugar under his chisel. Soon the anatomy of the marble began matching the anatomy of his clay model: powerful chest, magnificent arms, a head focusing enormous power. Hammer and chisel in hand, he stood back

from the galvanic male figure before him, still faceless, thinking that marble had again yielded to his love. From love came all of life.

MONNA ALESSANDRA went to bed feeling tired one night, and never awoke. Lodovico took the loss hard; he was deeply attached to his mother, and had for her a gentleness he showed no one else. For Michelangelo the loss was poignant; since the death of his own mother, she had been the only woman to whom he could turn for love or understanding. Without his grandmother the Buonarroti house seemed gloomier than ever.

The palace by contrast was in an uproar over Contessina's approaching marriage. Piero was preparing to give Florence the greatest celebration in its history. The palace was full of singing, dancing, drinking, revelry; yet Michelangelo was lonely. He spent most of his time in the sculpture garden. Piero was polite but distant. Michelangelo heard him boast that he had two extraordinary people in the palace: Michelangelo, who made great snowmen, and a Spanish footman who could outrun his best horse. He showed no interest in Michelangelo's work, and when the Hercules was finished it was Granacci who sold it to the Strozzi family for their new palace. They offered a hundred gold florins. It was Michelangelo's first sale, and he gave the fee to his father.

Three thousand wedding guests had poured into the city by the morning of May 24. Michelangelo walked with Granacci behind the wedding party as Contessina and Ridolfi paraded through streets decorated with flags, preceded by trumpeters. In front of the palace was a fountain garlanded with fruits, from which red and white wine flowed so abundantly that it ran down the street. On the steps of the cathedral a notary read aloud the marriage contract, with Contessina's huge dowry, to the thousands who jammed the piazza.

Michelangelo went to the church, but slipped out in the middle of the Nuptial Mass. He watched the wedding party emerge from the church, Ridolfi tall in his white satin cloak, jet-black hair framing his thin face; Contessina in a crimson samite gown with long train and collar of white ermine. As soon as she was seated in a bedecked stand the entertainment began: a play depicting "A Fight Between Chastity and Marriage," a tournament in which Piero jousted, and, as the climax, a favourite of the times: a contest of the "Knights of the She-Cat" in

which a man, naked to the waist, entered a cage where he had to kill a cat with his teeth, without using his hands.

Later, a seat was reserved for Michelangelo in the banqueting hall. Eight hundred barrels of wine, a thousand pounds of meat and game provided the feast. A child was placed in Contessina's arms and a gold florin in her shoe to bring fertility and riches.

After the feast Michelangelo left the palace and walked from piazza to piazza, where Piero had set up prodigal tables of food and wine for all of Florence. But the people seemed glum.

He did not return to the palace to see Contessina taken to the Ridolfi palace. High in Settignano, he waited and watched at the Topolinos' until the sun lit the roof of the Buonarroti house across the ravine.

AFTER Contessina's marriage everything seemed to change: for himself, for Florence. Ghirlandaio had died suddenly. Savonarola demanded that Piero be prosecuted by the council for violation of the city's laws against extravagance; and the Medici cousins began a political campaign against Piero. When they asked Michelangelo to carve a young St. John in white marble as the patron saint of their home, he hesitated. He needed work, but Prior Bichiellini had told him that the aim of the cousins was to drive Lorenzo's family out of Florence, and he still felt a great loyalty to Lorenzo. Finally he declined the commission.

Piero was ignoring the city council, neglecting affairs of state. Prior Bichiellini, his eyes snapping with anger, said to Michelangelo: "His Medici ancestors loved Florence first, themselves second. Piero won't listen to counsel. A weak man at the helm, and a power-hungry monk working to replace him—these are sad days for Florence, my son."

"I have heard Savonarola's sermons on the 'coming flood.' Half the people of the city believe Judgment Day is the next rain away. What is his purpose in terrorizing Florence?"

"He wants to become Pope. He has plans to conquer the Near East, then the Orient."

One day Lodovico sent for Michelangelo. When he reached home, his father took him into the boys' bedroom, opened Giovansimone's clothing chest, and scooped out jewellery, gold and silver buckles, medallions. "What does this mean?" he asked. "Has Giovansimone been burgling people's homes?"

"No, Father. But I have heard he is a captain in Savonarola's Army of Boys. They strip women in the streets who violate his orders against wearing jewellery in public. If they hear a family is violating the sumptuary laws, they strip the house bare. If they meet opposition, they stone people half to death."

"But is Giovansimone allowed to keep these things?"

"He is supposed to bring them to San Marco. He has converted his gang of hoodlums into what Savonarola calls his 'White-Shirted Angels.' The Signoria is powerless to stop them."

IN THE AUTUMN, Florence became embroiled in an international dispute. Charles VIII of France, whose grandfather had built the first standing army since Caesar, was now bringing that army into Italy to conquer the Kingdom of Naples. Piero's cousins had assured the king that Florence awaited his triumphal entry.

But Piero refused Charles safe passage. The citizens of Florence were ready to welcome the French because they would help to drive out Piero, and Piero had only one hundred mercenaries to stop Charles's army of over thirty thousand. A dozen times Michelangelo realized he should flee the palace and the city; but he could not bring himself to desert Lorenzo's family.

On September 21 Savonarola preached a sermon in the Duomo. His voice rang out like a clap of doom. The hair of the Florentines stood on end as he portrayed the destruction of Florence and every living creature in it. His faintest whisper pierced the remotest corners of the vast cathedral. People left the Duomo half dead with fright, speechless, their eyes glassy.

The web closed tighter each day: it could be only a few days before the French army entered Florence. One morning Michelangelo rose to find the palace abandoned except for a few old servants. Piero had rushed out to treat with Charles, while the rest of the family sought refuge in a hillside villa. The palace was frightening in its hollow silence as Michelangelo walked the echoing corridors and looked into the big empty rooms.

Piero offered Charles Florence's vassal cities of Pisa and Leghorn and two hundred thousand florins if he "would continue down the coast and avoid Florence." Outraged at this humiliating capitulation,

the Signoria sounded the bell to summon the people and publicly castigated Piero for his cowardice and ineptitude. When Piero returned, the city was wild with rage. Crowds yelled, "Go away!" hissed, and threw stones. Piero drew his sword; the crowds chased him through the streets. He disappeared into the palace and diverted the throngs momentarily by making the remaining servants bring out wine and cake.

Then couriers came down the street crying, "The Signoria has banished the Medici! There is a price of four thousand florins on Piero de' Medici's head!"

Piero managed to escape through the back garden with his brother, Cardinal Giovanni; but Florence was only a moment behind. Into the courtyard surged the mob. Rioters poured down into the wine cellars, and hundreds of bottles passed from mouth to mouth. Then the mob mounted the stairs to sack the palace.

Michelangelo stood defensively before the Donatello David. The crowd was still pouring through the main gate, jamming the courtyard, faces he had known all his life, quiet, good-natured people, suddenly inflamed with the faceless irresponsibility of the mob. He saw a Donatello statue carried out through the back garden. Roman portraits and busts were smashed with pikes and poles.

He raced up the main staircase to Lorenzo's study and slammed the door behind him. He looked about at the priceless treasures. How could he protect them? His eyes fell upon the food lift. He pulled on the ropes and, when the lift was level, began piling in the small objects. The toothless Faun that he had copied for his own first piece of sculpture he stuffed inside his shirt. Then he sent the lift down a little way and closed the door. The mob reached the study at that moment and began looting the room. He fought his way to his own room, where he hid Bertoldo's models under the beds.

Hundreds of rioters were now sweeping through the palace. In Lorenzo's room Michelangelo watched helplessly as they cut paintings out of their frames, ripped statues off their bases. Some burly porters smashed open the safe: out came a rain of twenty thousand florins which sent the mob into a paroxysm of joy as they fought each other for the gold coins.

He made his way down the back staircase and cut through back alleys to the Ridolfi palace. There he left Contessina a brief note: *When it is*

safe, send someone to your father's study to look in the food lift. He signed it *M.B.* When the city at last slept, he slipped out to the Medici stables. Two grooms had stayed with the horses. They helped him saddle one. There was no guard at the city gate as he left Florence.

BY THE afternoon of the second day he had crossed the Apennines and dropped down into Bologna, with its high-towered orange brick walls. He entered the city through a produce market where old women were sweeping up litter with brooms made of twigs. The narrow, tortuous streets, covered over by the protruding first stories of the houses, were suffocatingly airless. Each house had a tower for protection against its neighbours, a custom that had been abolished in Florence by Cosimo de' Medici, who had obliged the Florentines to saw off their towers at roof height.

He reached a square with a majestic church, and was suddenly surrounded by Bolognese guards. "You are a stranger?"

"Florentine," Michelangelo replied.

"Your thumb, if you please. To see the mark of the red wax."

"I don't carry red wax."

"Then come with us. You are under arrest."

He followed the guards to the custom-office, where an officer explained that every stranger coming into Bologna had to register and be thumb-printed. "Ignorance of our law excuses no one," he said. "You are fined fifty Bolognese pounds."

"I haven't got that much money."

"Too bad. Fifty days in jail."

Michelangelo stared. Before he could recover his wits a man stepped forward. He said, "Is not your name Buonarroti?"

"Yes, sir."

The Bolognese turned to the officer. "This young man's father has charge of a custom-office, as you have. Might not our sister cities offer hospitality to each other's important families?"

Flattered, the officer replied, "Assuredly, Excellency."

As they left the custom-house, Michelangelo studied his benefactor. He was a man in his mid-forties, with a strong, pleasant face. "I am Gianfrancesco Aldovrandi," he said. "We met at a dinner of Lorenzo de' Medici's."

"Of course! You told me you had great sculptors in Bologna."

"Now I can show you their work. Won't you give me the pleasure of your company at supper?"

"The pleasure will be mine," Michelangelo said. "I haven't delighted my stomach since I lost sight of the Duomo."

"You have come to the right city," replied Aldovrandi. "Bologna is known as *La Grassa*, The Fat. Here we eat better than anywhere in Europe."

The Aldovrandi palace was a gracefully proportioned building, three stories high. A groom took Michelangelo's horse and Michelangelo went with Aldovrandi to see his library, which Lorenzo de' Medici had helped him to assemble.

He told Michelangelo that the fleeing Medici and their party had passed through Bologna the day before. "But why do you not remain here?" Aldovrandi went on. "I may find a sculpture commission for you."

Michelangelo's eyes gleamed. He would find lodgings

"Unthinkable!" replied Aldovrandi. "No friend of Lorenzo de' Medici may live in a Bolognese inn. You will be our guest."

HE HAD been invited into a joyful house, with laughter ringing through it. Aldovrandi had six sons, and Signora Aldovrandi welcomed Michelangelo as though he were a seventh. His host, a retired banker, was free to spend his time as he would. He took Michelangelo on a tour of the city.

They walked under arcades displaying the most delicious foods of Italy: exquisite cheese, the whitest of breads, the rarest of wines; and in every street, of course, the world-famous *salame*. Students from the university studied at little cafés under orange-coloured porticoes, or played dice and cards.

"There is one thing I miss, Messer Aldovrandi," Michelangelo said. "I save seen no stone sculpture in Bologna."

"We have no quarries. Our sculpture is usually of terracotta."

They soon came upon a young man making terracotta busts. He was powerfully built, and his skin was burnt the colour of Bologna brick. "Vincenzo, this is my friend Buonarroti," Aldovrandi said, "the best young sculptor in Florence."

"Then it is proper that we meet," said Vincenzo, "for I am Bologna's best young sculptor. I am the great Dell' Arca's successor. I am to finish his Pisano tomb in San Domenico."

"You have received the commission?" asked Aldovrandi sharply.

"Not yet, Excellency, but it must come."

They walked on to the church of San Domenico and Aldovrandi pointed out Dell' Arca's marble carvings. "There are three figures left to be sculptured: an angel, St. Petronius and St. Proculus. These are the marbles that Vincenzo said he was going to carve. Successor to Dell' Arca, indeed! He is the successor to his grandfather and father, who are the finest brickmakers in Bologna. He should stick to their trade."

MICHELANGELO found a new kind of excitement in Bologna. At a supper given by his host's nephew, Marco, he met Clarissa Saffi, who acted as Marco's hostess.

She was slender, sensuous, golden-haired, the hair plucked back from the natural hairline of the brow in the fashion of the day. She was unlike any woman he had ever seen, one of those rare creatures whose every breath was made for love. He was aware of her not merely through his eyes but through the blood pounding in his veins; and Clarissa's welcoming smile for him was embracing, for she liked all men. She had been Marco's mistress for three years, since he had stumbled across her cleaning her father's cobbler's shop. He had taught her how to wear rich gowns and jewels, had hired a tutor to teach her to read and write.

After supper, while the men were discussing politics, Michelangelo found himself alone with her in a little French music-room. He could not tear his eyes away from her bodice, a golden net which seemed to expose her breasts while keeping them under cover. Clarissa was amused at his gaucherie in staring. "You are an artist, Buonarroti?"

"I am a sculptor."

"Could you carve me in marble?"

"You're already carved," he blurted out. "Flawlessly!"

Colour rose in her creamy cheeks. They laughed together, leaning a little towards each other. "Will I see you again?" he asked.

"If Signor Aldovrandi brings you."

"Not otherwise?"

She smiled. "You wish me to pose for you?"

"No. Yes. I don't know. I don't even know what I am saying."

She laughed, her movements tightening the net over her bosom. He thought: "This is *pazzesco*, crazy! What has happened to me?"

His friend Aldovrandi saw the naked longing in his eyes. On the way home, he warned him: "My nephew has the quickest temper and rapier in Bologna."

But a few Sundays later Aldovrandi again took him to Marco's villa, where a group of intimates were playing cards. Michelangelo knew nothing of such games. He sat with Clarissa before a fire in another room, watching her face in the firelight, the features so fragile, yet with such implicit passion.

"It's pleasant to have someone of my own age to talk to," Clarissa confided. "All Marco's friends are older."

"You do not have young friends?"

"Not any more. But I am happy." She put her hand in his, studied his face. "Why do you always seem embarrassed with me? It is good to be desired. Have you ever been in love?"

"In a way," he said.

"It's always 'in a way.'"

"Is love never whole?"

"Not that I know of. It's political; or to get children born and scrubbing done; or for pearls and palaces, as with myself."

"Or for what we feel for each other?"

Her body stirred and he trembled. She said, "We are young people together. Why should we not want each other?"

He thrashed the night through, hearing her words over and over again in the darkness of his room.

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IT WAS during the Christmas festivities, with the symbolic "good-wish" log burning in the drawing-room fire-place, and the poor children of the town singing carols outside, that Aldovrandi told Michelangelo he had secured for him the commission to complete the San Domenico tomb. Aldovrandi had also arranged for him to use Dell' Arca's workshop, one of the work stalls for maintenance crews in the courtyard of a huge church.

He had been working only a few days at his drawing table when

Vincenzo, the terracotta sculptor, loomed massively above him. His face was a raw umber from the cold, his eyes intense. "Buonarroti, you stole the commission I've been after. You take bread out of the mouths of us native sculptors."

Placatingly, Michelangelo replied, "I understand. I lost a commission last year."

"It's good you understand. Go and tell Messer Aldovrandi you've decided against doing this. Or I'll make you sorry you came here."

Michelangelo looked at Vincenzo. He was Michelangelo's own age, about nineteen, but loomed a head taller than he did and probably weighed twice as much as his own one hundred and twenty pounds. He thought of Torrigiani, could see Torrigiani's powerful fist coming through the air. . . .

"What's the matter, Buonarroti? You don't look good. Afraid I'll make life miserable for you?"

"You already have."

But not so miserable as to relinquish the opportunity to carve three beautiful blocks of white Carrara marble. . . .

ONCE A week business associates of Aldovrandi made the trip to Florence and brought back the latest news. Charles VIII had entered the city, raised a hundred and twenty thousand florins from it and won the right to maintain two fortresses there until his war with Naples was over. Now he had taken his army on to the south. The wheels of the city-state had creaked to a halt; it was torn by factions. But by mid-December news reached Bologna that Savonarola had introduced a democratic system of elected councils and universal suffrage.

With the coming of the New Year, Piero de' Medici set up headquarters in Bologna. One night he dined at the Aldovrandi palace. When they met, Michelangelo exclaimed, "Excellency, I wish this meeting were at the Medici palace."

"We'll be back there soon," Piero growled, "I am assembling an army." He outlined his plan for the reconquest of Florence, and asked Aldovrandi to contribute two thousand florins.

"Excellency, are you sure this is the best way?" asked Aldovrandi. "When your great-grandfather Cosimo was exiled, he waited until the city found it needed him and called him back."

"Florence wants me back now. It is just Savonarola and my cousins who have schemed against me." He turned to Michelangelo. "You shall enter my army as an engineer."

Michelangelo sat with his head bowed. "But if the city were bombarded, the art treasures could be destroyed," he said.

"We can replace all that paint and marble in a year."

Aldovrandi said, "Excellency, I must decline. Lorenzo would have been the first to stop you, were he alive."

Piero looked at Michelangelo. "And you, Buonarroti?"

"Excellency, I cannot wage war against Florence."

Piero pushed his chair back in a rage and left the room.

MICHELANGELO was carving a lusty angel with the wings of an eagle for the Domenico tomb when he acquired a neighbour in the stall opposite his workshop. It was Vincenzo, whose father had a contract to make bricks and tiles for repairs to a cathedral. Vincenzo gave the workmen running entertainment by taunting Michelangelo throughout the day. When he arrived with a wagon-load of fresh tiles, he would say: "I made a hundred durable stones yesterday. What did you make? Charcoal scratches on paper?" Encouraged by the laughter of the workmen, he continued, "Why don't you go home and leave Bologna to its natives?"

The sneers of Vincenzo and the workmen made him ill: the forces of destruction always one short step behind creation! Ignoring them, he finished the angel and carved a St. Petronius, patron saint of Bologna, holding the city in his arms.

"Dell' Arca could not have surpassed it," said Aldovrandi when he saw the polished piece.

THE FIRST of May came, the happiest day in the year for Bologna, when the Countess of Love reigned, people gathered wild flowers for relatives and friends, and each lover placed a leafy tree tied with coloured silk ribbons under the window of his beloved while friends serenaded her. A platform was erected, covered with damask and festoons of flowers, where the Countess of Love was crowned, with all Bologna gathered to pay homage.

Michelangelo too wanted to pay homage to love, or whatever it was

that had started to boil in his blood in this intoxicating air. But he did not see Clarissa. He saw Marco in the midst of his family, he saw the old woman who accompanied Clarissa on her trips to the city; but no Clarissa.... And then his feet were carrying him swiftly up the road to her villa.

The front gate was unbolted. He went to the door, pushed on the clapper, knocked again and again. Just as he began to think that no one was at home, the door opened a crack. There stood Clarissa, in a *peignoir*, her golden hair hanging loose.

He stepped inside the door. There was no sound in the house. She threw the bolt. Then they were in a sense-annihilating embrace, their mouths moist and sweet and drinking deep, their bodies merging. She led him to her bedroom.

AFTER May Day he started to work on a virile St. Proculus, the man who had been martyred before the gates of Bologna in 303, while in the full flower of his youth. Quite unabashedly, he modelled his own portrait: the broken nose, the steadfast eyes, resolved to triumph: against the enemies of art, of life.

The hot summer months passed busily. Vincenzo had disappeared, and so had Clarissa. He learned that Marco had taken her to his hunting lodge in the Apennines for the summer. The Aldovrandi family, too, spent the summer in the mountains, but one day Aldovrandi rode in to take care of his affairs. He brought startling news from Florence.

"Fra Savonarola has come out into the open. He has declared war on the Pope!"

Michelangelo was not as shocked as Aldovrandi expected, for Prior Bichiellini had predicted this long ago.

"How has the Pope replied?"

"He summoned Savonarola to Rome, but Savonarola declared, 'It is not the will of God that I should leave this place.'"

BY THE AUTUMN, St. Proculus was finished. Michelangelo was exhausted, but happy with it; so was Aldovrandi.

With his work done, Michelangelo had grown homesick for Florence, but he could not go without saying good-bye to Clarissa. Aldovrandi invited him to a party at a villa in the hills where the wealthy young

Bolognese brought their mistresses for feasting and dancing. Michelangelo saw that there would be no chance for even a moment of privacy. They would have to say good-bye in a crowded room, and on their faces they would have to wear the bantering Bolognese smile. When he told Clarissa he was leaving, her fixed smile never wavered. "I'm sorry. When will you return?"

"I don't know. Perhaps never."

"Everyone returns to Bologna," she assured him.

THE FAMILY was glad to have him home. Lodovico was delighted with the twenty-five ducats he brought. Buonarroto had grown a foot; Sigismondo was apprenticed to the Wine Guild; Giovansimone was maintaining himself regally in a flat across the Arno as one of the leaders in Savonarola's Army of Boys.

Granacci, who was working to keep Ghirlandaio's old studio afloat, told Michelangelo that the "Popolano family" wanted him to carve something for them.

"Popolano?" he said. "I don't know any Popolanos."

"Yes, you do." Granacci's voice had an edge to it. "It's the Medici cousins, Lorenzo and Giovanni. They have changed their name to sound like the 'People's Party,' and are helping to rule Florence."

The brothers received him in a drawing-room filled with Lorenzo's art treasures. Michelangelo glanced from a Botticelli to a Donatello, stupefied.

"We did not steal them," Giovanni said easily; "the city auctioned them off and we bought them." He added that they were still interested in having Michelangelo do a young St. John. If he cared to move into the palace, he would be welcome.

He went at once to the Ridolfi palace. Contessina received him in the drawing-room, still attended by her old nurse. She was heavy with child.

"Contessina. *Come va?*"

"You said I would bear many sons."

He gazed at her pale cheeks and burning eyes. And he remembered Clarissa.

"All love is 'in a way.'"

"I have come to tell you that your cousins have offered me a com-

mission. I could not join Piero's army, but I want no other disloyalty on my conscience."

"You proved your loyalty, Michelangelo, when they first made the offer. If you wish to accept now, do so."

He went to tell the Popolanos he would accept. As he walked the familiar streets of the city he felt an air of hostility and suspicion. Florentines who had lived at peace with each other since Cosimo de' Medici had split into three factions, shouting imprecations at each other. The *Arrabbiati*—the "Maddened Ones"—were men of wealth and experience who hated both Piero and Savonarola. The "Whites," including the Popolanos, disliked Savonarola, but supported him because he was on the side of popular government. Lastly, there were Piero's "Greys," intriguing for his return.

On New Year's Day of 1496 a large group of men from the anti-Savonarola parties converged on his monastery, carrying torches and chanting: "Burn Savonarola's house! Burn San Marco! Burn the dirty friar!"

The San Marco monks came out and stood shoulder to shoulder in a line across the front of the church and monastery, arms linked. The crowd continued to shout imprecations, but the monks held their ground; and after a time the mob began to drift out of the piazza.

MICHELANGELO could not bring himself to live in the renamed "Popolano palace," but he did set up his work-bench in the garden. He saw Beppe in the Duomo work-yard and found a good piece of marble at a reasonable price. The rest of the money the Popolanos gave him he turned over to his father. The Popolanos treated him as a friend, frequently inviting him inside to see a new piece of art. Even Lodovico seemed pleased with him. Yet he could find little joy, and no creative surge, although St. John was a sympathetic subject.

He read the story of John:

In those days John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea; Repent, he said, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. . . . There is a voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord. . . .

This boy, first going out to preach, was not the older man who baptized Jesus. So Michelangelo carved a fifteen-year-old, a vital portrait

of a youth, and the Medici cousins were well pleased. But despair enveloped Michelangelo. "I have carved six pieces in four years," he said to Granacci. "But only my St. Proculus has something original in it."

On his birthday he walked disconsolately into the workshop in the Popolano garden. He found a block of marble sitting on his work-bench. Across it, scrawled in charcoal in Granacci's handwriting, was the greeting: "Try again!"

He did, immediately; an infant, robust, pagan, sleeping with his right arm under his head, carved in the Roman tradition. It was a lark, something simply for fun.

When Lorenzo Popolano saw the piece his face flushed with pleasure. "If you were to treat it so that it seemed to have been buried in the earth, it would pass for an antique Cupid. You could sell it then in Rome for a good price. I have a shrewd dealer there, Baldassare del Milanese."

So Michelangelo rubbed dirt into the statue, stained the outside edges with earth tans and rust, and used a hard bristle brush to rub in the discoloration. He was as amused at the idea of the fraud as he had been at the carving itself.

It was sold to the first customer to whom Baldassare offered it: Cardinal Riario di San Giorgio. Lorenzo handed on thirty gold florins to Michelangelo. Michelangelo had thought an antique Cupid would bring at least a hundred florins in Rome; even so, it was twice what it would have brought in Florence.

JUST BEFORE LENT Michelangelo saw Giovansimone hurrying down the street at the head of a group of white-robed boys, their arms laden with mirrors, paintings, statuary, jewel boxes. Michelangelo grabbed his brother, almost toppling his load of loot. "Giovansimone! I haven't laid eyes on you for four months."

Giovansimone shook his arm loose.

"Can't talk now. But come to the Piazza della Signoria tomorrow at dusk."

It would have been impossible for Michelangelo or anyone else in Florence to miss the giant spectacle the following evening. In the four main quarters of Florence the Army of Boys in their white robes were shaped into military formations. Preceded by drummers, pipers and

mace bearers, carrying olive branches in their hands and chanting, "Long live Christ, the King of Florence! Long live Mary, the Queen!" they marched on the Piazza della Signoria, where a huge pyramidal scaffold had been erected. The citizens of Florence and the outlying villages poured into the square. The section for the burning was roped off by the monks of San Marco standing arm in arm, with Savonarola in a commanding position.

The boys built their pyre. At the base they threw rouge pots, perfumes, mirrors, bolts of silk, earrings, bracelets. Then came all the paraphernalia of gambling: cards, dice, chequer-boards. Next, they piled on books, manuscripts, paintings, ancient sculpture. Above them came musical instruments, masks and fancy-dress costumes, and jewels which sparkled as they landed.

Michelangelo saw Botticelli run up and throw some of his pictures on the pyre. Monks of the Della Robbia family added their terracotta sculptures.

It was difficult to tell from the cries of the crowd whether they greeted the sacrifices with fear or ecstasy.

Savonarola raised his arms for silence. The guarding line of monks unlocked their arms and raised them to the heavens. A monk handed a lighted torch to Savonarola, who walked round the pyre, touching it in one place after another until the scaffolding was one huge mass of flames. Then the Army of Boys marched about the pyre chanting, "Long live Christ! Long live the Virgin!" Great answering shouts went up from the packed mass: "Long live Christ! Long live the Virgin!"

Tears came to Michelangelo's eyes as the flames mounted amid wild singing and crying. With all his heart he wished to go away, far from the sight of the Duomo.

As if in answer to his thoughts, a groom came, a few months later, to ask Michelangelo if he would come to the Popolano palace to meet a Roman nobleman named Leo Baglioni. He had been sent to Florence by Cardinal Riario to find the sculptor of the Cupid.

"It was I," Michelangelo confessed. "Baldassare sent me thirty florins for the piece."

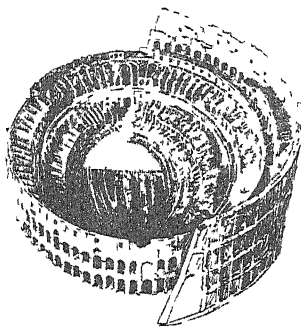
"Thirty! But the cardinal paid two hundred."

"Two hundred! Why, that . . . that thief!"

"Precisely what the cardinal said." Leo Baglioni had a mischievous gleam in his eye. "He suspected it was a fraud. Why not return to Rome with me and settle your account with Baldassare? The cardinal wants you to stay with him. He said anyone who could imitate so well should do even better original carvings."

"A few articles from my home, and I shall be ready for the journey."

BOOK FIVE
The City



HE PAUSED on a rise just north of the city. Rome lay below in its bed of hills, destroyed, as though sacked by vandals. The Romans no longer had any civic pride. The small piazza Michelangelo and Baglioni passed as they entered the city stank from piled garbage. They rode through narrow lanes with broken cobbles underfoot; shops were huddled between ancient palaces that looked as though they would topple at any moment. Neglected, badly governed, the Mother City of Christendom was now a waste heap and a dunghill, where dead animals lay underfoot, and citizens burnt ancient marble columns for their lime content.

Baglioni led Michelangelo at last into the Campo dei Fiori, an open-air market with clean and colourful stalls, full of cooks and housewives shopping for their dinner. At last Michelangelo was able to smile. "I almost turned my horse and made a run for Florence," he said.

"Rome is pitiful. Pope Sixtus IV made an effort to improve it, but under the Borgia family it is decaying again."

Michelangelo was given a temporary room in Baglioni's house, and late that afternoon they strolled to Cardinal Riario's palace. Riario had a long hooked nose that clamped down on a tight-lipped mouth; he greeted Michelangelo perfunctorily and sent him out to see the sculpture of Rome. With Baglioni guiding him, Michelangelo moved half stunned in a forest of sculpture: surely this miserable dirty city must hold the greatest collection of antique art in the world.

"What do you think of the marbles you have seen?" the cardinal asked him later. "Can you do something equally beautiful?"

"Perhaps not as beautiful. But we will see what I can do."

"I like that answer, Buonarroti; it shows humility."

He did not feel humble. All he had meant was that his pieces would be different from anything he had seen.

"We had best start at once," said Riario. "My carriage is outside. It can take us to the Trastevere stone-yards."

In the stone-yard just outside the Vatican wall Michelangelo wandered among the blocks wondering how large a piece he dared select. He stopped before a white Carrara column over seven feet tall and four feet thick. His eyes lighted with excitement. He assured the cardinal that there could be a fine statue contained in it. Cardinal Riario paid thirty-seven ducats from the purse in his belt.

As soon as the marble was delivered to a workshop Baglioni had found, the cardinal sent for Michelangelo, and told him that he was to live in the Riario palace. No word about what he wanted sculptured. Or what the price would be. Or whether he was to have regular payments during his stay. A chamberlain directed him to one of twenty narrow cells at the back of the ground floor, where he unpacked. At his first meal he found himself relegated to the "third category" dining-room, with the cardinal's scriveners and book-keepers, purchasing agents for his far-flung business enterprises. Michelangelo was to live in the palace as one of a crew of skilled workmen. Nothing more.

EARLY THE next morning he went to see Baldassare, the art dealer, who had been obliged to return Cardinal Riario's two hundred ducats for the Cupid. He was a swarthy fat man with an enormous stomach which he pushed ahead of him as he came forward in his sculpture yard. Michelangelo demanded the return of his Cupid, offering to repay the thirty florins.

"Certainly not!" the dealer cried.

"You defrauded me on the price."

"It is you who are the fraud. You sent me a false antique."

Fuming, Michelangelo left the yard. Then he burst into laughter. "Baldassare is right. It is I who was the cheat."

He heard someone behind him exclaim: "Michelangelo Buonarroti! Do you always talk to yourself?"

He turned, recognized a man who had worked briefly for his Uncle Francesco. They had never become friends in Florence, but here they fell on each other's necks. "Balducci! What are you doing in Rome?"

"Working for Jacopo Galli's bank. Head book-keeper. The dumbest Florentine is smarter than the smartest Roman, so I'm moving up fast. How about having dinner together? I'll take you to a Florentine restaurant. When you taste the *tortellini* and beef-steak, you'll think you're back in sight of the Duomo."

After dinner Balducci took him to see a distant cousin of Michelangelo's, the banker Paolo Rucellai, who had a palace in the Ponte district. Here the Florentines in Rome lived close together, with their own markets, their own foods brought down from Tuscany. No Romans could move into this district: the hatred was mutual. The Romans said: "Better a corpse in the house than a Florentine at the door," while the Florentines reinterpreted the S.P.Q.R. of the Roman *Senatus Populus Que Romanus* to read, *"Sono Porci, Questi Romani.* They are pigs, these Romans." In the midst of the chaos and filth of Rome, the Florentines washed their streets every day, kept their houses in repair. There were fines against dumping refuse in the streets. Guards policed the quarter at night; it was the only section where one was sure not to stumble over a corpse on one's doorstep at daybreak. Michelangelo was presented to the leading families of this Florentine community, and was accepted at once.

Meantime the cardinal, who gave him no commission, ignored him. Each morning he drew from models: Corsicans from the papal bodyguard, German typographers, French glove-makers, Spanish booksellers, Portuguese trunk makers. The months of dissection had given his drawing an authority, an inner truth. Yet he could not take up his carving tools. "Exercise extreme care," Leo Baglioni warned him, "not to touch that column until Cardinal Riario gives you permission to do so. He is adamant about his properties."

He was humiliated at being cautioned like a labourer not to manhandle the property of his *padrone.*

He received an invitation from Paolo Rucellai to attend a reception for Piero de' Medici, who was attempting as usual to gather an army,

and Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici, who had taken a house in Rome. That morning, as he finished shaving and combing his hair, forming deep curls on his forehead, he heard the sound of trumpets and ran out to see at last the Borgia Pope whom the Medici so feared, and whom Savonarola had picked as his special target. Preceded by red-robed cardinals and followed by purple-cloaked princes, Pope Alexander VI, born Rodrigo Borgia in Spain, white-robed on a white horse, progressed towards the Franciscan convent in Trastevere. He was a big, virile man with a swarthy complexion. As a cardinal he had won the reputation of amassing more beautiful women and vaster wealth than anyone preceding him. He had been reproved by Pope Pius II for "unseemly gallantry," a euphemism that covered six known children by various mothers.

When his colourful procession had passed, Michelangelo walked to the Rucellai palace. In the drawing-room he bowed to Piero, who was cool; but Cardinal Giovanni, despised by the Borgia Pope and frozen out of all church activity, seemed happy to see him. Giulio was frigid.

Thirty Florentines sat down to dinner, eating *cannelloni* stuffed with chopped beef and mushrooms and veal in milk, drinking Brolio wines and talking animatedly. They always referred to their adversary only as "the Borgia," striving to preserve their reverence for the papacy while expressing their contempt for the Spanish adventurer who had seized the Vatican and was ruling on the premise that all the wealth of Christendom belonged to the papacy. The Florentine colony favoured Savonarola in his struggle against the Pope, and found Piero's attempt to gather an army embarrassing.

In November Piero finally left with troops to reconquer Florence, but he came back to Rome penniless, and with his army scattered. He proceeded to scandalize Rome by his heavy gambling and a passion for every vice the city offered. Giovanni's paintings, bronzes, tapestries and silver plate were all pledged, at twenty per cent interest, to cover Piero's debts. Florentine bankers said: "Every florin the Medici spends costs them eight lire interest." Michelangelo was shocked to see the ravages on Piero's face: his once handsome features were bloated and red.

WEEKS PASSED and still no commission came from Cardinal Riario. Then one day Michelangelo met a Florentine architect named Giuliano

da Sangallo, a friend of Lorenzo. Sangallo listened intently while the younger man spilt out his frustration.

"You are in the service of the wrong cardinal," Sangallo said. "When Cardinal Rovere returns to Rome, I shall introduce you. And tomorrow I will show you the Rome of grandeur, when the world's greatest architects built here; the Rome I shall rebuild once Cardinal Rovere becomes Pope. By tomorrow night, you'll forget sculpture and give yourself over to architecture."

It was a needed diversion. They sketched the great Roman buildings, re-creating them from the ruins and from the descriptions of Plutarch and other writers. By nightfall, Michelangelo was exhausted, Sangallo triumphant. He was the first man to instruct Michelangelo in the art of architecture.

Still more time passed before he could get an appointment with Riario. "What have you been thinking of for me?" the cardinal asked in good humour. "Something vigorously pagan, to match those fine antiques in Cardinal Rovere's garden?"

Michelangelo thought quickly. Who was the most joyous of the Greek gods? Why, Bacchus, god of wine, symbol of fruitfulness. "Yes, Your Grace," he said. "I have. A Bacchus."

But while he was drawing his plans for it, violence broke out in the Florentine quarter, the cobble-stones running with blood. It flared up because the Pope had excommunicated Savonarola; and it ended in the grisly murder of the Pope's son, Juan Borgia. His body, hands tied, slashed with knife wounds, was found in the Tiber. The Romans could not conceal their joy, but Riario went into mourning with his Pope. The palace was closed to all but the most compelling business: sculpture was forgotten.

A second blow to Michelangelo was the news of his stepmother Lucrezia's death, in a few broken sentences from his father. *"La Migliore,"* he thought with affection, "The Best." She had given of her best to all the nine Buonarroti. Her stepson shed a tear for her passing.

A few days later his brother Buonarroto arrived in Rome. "How is Father?" Michelangelo asked. "How has he taken Lucrezia's death?"

"Badly. Locks himself in his bedroom." He paused, then added, "And he is about to be arrested for a bad debt. Since we have only a few florins left it could mean prison."

"Prison! *Dio mio!* He must sell the villa and farm."

"He says he will not deprive us of our last inheritance."

Michelangelo was furious. "Our last inheritance is the Buonarroti name. We've got to protect it."

"But what to do? I earn only a few scudi a month. . . ."

"And I earn nothing. But I will! I'll make Cardinal Riario see the justice of my position."

The cardinal listened, toying with the gold chain round his neck. "Of course, you should not have given all this time for nothing. For your patience, I give you the marble block."

He had only one recourse: the Florentine bankers, Rucellai and Cavalcanti. He explained his plight to Paolo Rucellai. "A loan from the bank? No; it is too expensive for you at twenty per cent interest. From me, yes, as a personal loan without interest. Will twenty-five florins help? You are to forget about it until you have money in your belt."

He ran home, gave Buonarroto the credit slip, and promised he would be responsible for the balance of Lodovico's debt.

"That's what Father wanted, of course," Buonarroto said. "He's not going to earn anything more; nor is Uncle Francesco. We can expect no help from Lionardo or Giovansimone. And Sigismondo . . . the Wine Guild has released him. You now have the support of the whole Buonarroti family on your hands."

Buying a small piece of marble with some of his last florins, Michelangelo carved a Cupid, a lovely child just awakened from sleep and holding up his arms to his mother. Balducci, his Florentine friend, was enchanted with its light-hearted warmth and asked if he might show it to his employer, Jacopo Galli, the banker.

They found Galli in his garden. He put down a copy of Aristophanes' *Frogs,* and pulled himself up from his chair. Slowly, he unfolded: six feet, six and a half; surely not seven? The tallest man Michelangelo had ever seen, hunched over at the shoulders from a lifetime of stooping to the short-statured Romans. He placed the Cupid on a pedestal, then settled back to study it. "I feel as though your Cupid had been sitting there since the day I was born," he said finally. "We must set a price; but first, tell me your circumstances."

Michelangelo related the story of his year with Riario.

"So you end up with no pay, and a seven-foot marble block? Shall

we say the Cupid is worth fifty ducats? Because I know you need money, I will allow my cupidity to knock the price down to twenty-five ducats. Then, because I detest shrewdness in dealing with artists, I will take the twenty-five ducats I was going to underpay you, and add them to my original estimate. Do you approve my formula?"

Michelangelo's eyes shone. "Signor Galli, for a year I have thought bad things about Romans. In your name, I apologize to the whole city."

"Now what could you carve from your big marble block?"

Michelangelo told him about his plans for a Bacchus. Galli was intrigued. "Would you be willing to move in here, and carve this Bacchus for me? For three hundred ducats?"

WHILE Michelangelo was carving the Bacchus, using as a model a self-indulgent young nobleman, much addicted to wine, Galli brought the aged, saintly French Cardinal Groslaye to see it. "But how do you achieve in a half-finished figure this sense of throbbing vitality?" the cardinal asked. "I can feel the blood and muscle under your marble skin." His fading eyes gleamed as he studied the figure. "My son," he said, "I am growing old. I must leave something behind me, to add to the beauties of Rome. I have secured permission from the Pope to dedicate a large sculpture in the Chapel of the Kings of France in St. Peter's. You, I believe, are the best sculptor in Rome."

A sculpture for St. Peter's, the oldest, most sacred basilica in Christendom! He went to St. Peter's next day to see a niche the cardinal had described him, and was aghast at the dilapidated condition of the church, which was leaning sharply to the left. In the chapel he measured the niche with his eye, disappointed to find it so deep that a statue would be seen only from the front.

He knew very soon that his theme would be a Pietà: Sorrow. The Madonna and Child was the beginning, the Pietà was the pre-ordained conclusion of everything that Mary had accepted in that fateful hour of decision he had carved in his Madonna of the Stairs. Now, thirty-three years later, her son was again on her lap, having completed His journey.

Galli took him to Groslaye's palace, where they waited for him to complete the five hours of prayer and offices required daily of a Benedictine. The cardinal was ashen after his long devotions, but when he

heard about the Pietà his eyes sparkled. He urged Michelangelo to find the most perfect marble and begin.

Later, Michelangelo said to Galli, "But first, the Bacchus."

"The Bacchus can wait. The cardinal can't. One day soon God will rest His hand just a trifle more heavily on his shoulder, and Groslaye will go to heaven."

"I cannot stop now," Michelangelo insisted stubbornly. "The Bacchus is completing itself in my mind. It must be perfect."

The following Sunday he went to dine with the Rucellai, eager to hear news of Florence. His Florentine friends told him that Savonarola had again defied the Pope; though he was excommunicated, he had celebrated three Masses in San Marco at Christmas. A vast throng saw him raise the Host in his hand, beseeching God to strike him dead if he deserved excommunication. When God refrained, Savonarola celebrated his vindication with another Burning of the Vanities.

But Florence was turning against Savonarola, tired from seven years of wrangling, and fearing the Pope's threat to put an interdict on the entire population, which could paralyse trade. They elected a new council; it arrested Savonarola and his chief aides, Fra Domenico and Fra Silvestro, and jailed them in the Pallazzo della Signoria. Then they appointed a Commission of Seventeen to secure a confession from him that his words were not divinely inspired.

Savonarola refused to recant. The commission tortured him; first, using the rack and the screw; then roping him to a pulley, raising him in the air, and dropping him with a sudden jerk of the rope. Savonarola, delirious, agreed to write a confession, but what he wrote was not satisfactory to the Signoria. He was tortured again, finally signed another confession but rejected it and was tortured a third time. At last, the commission declared him guilty of heresy and sentenced him to death.

A throng filled the Piazza della Signoria when Savonarola, Fra Domenico and Fra Silvestro were led out on to the Signoria steps, and stripped of their vestments. They mounted the gibbets, praying silently. Ropes and chains were put about their necks. Within an instant, all three were dangling, their necks broken. Then a pyre under the gibbets was lighted. The three bodies were held aloft by the chains after the ropes had burnt. The half-consumed corpses were stoned, and the ashes dumped into the Arno.

Savonarola's martyrdom shook Michelangelo profoundly. Filled with pity, he turned to work on his Bacchus: with marble in his hands, the world was good. He worked intensely and by the end of the summer the statue was finished.

Galli was overjoyed with it. "I feel as though Bacchus is fully alive and will drop his cup at any moment. You have made for me the finest sculpture in all Italy."

The following night Galli brought home a contract for Michelangelo with Groslaye. In it Michelangelo found himself called *maestro* for the first time. It was agreed that for the sum of four hundred and fifty ducats he would make a marble Pietà to be completed in a year. In addition Galli had written: *I, Jacopo Galli, do promise that the work will be more beautiful than any work in marble to be seen in Rome today, and such that no master of our own time will be able to produce a better.*

Michelangelo gazed at Galli with affection. "Suppose when I finish the cardinal says, 'I have seen better marbles in Rome.' What happens then?"

"I give His Grace back his papal ducats."

"And you are left with the statue!"

Galli's eyes twinkled. "I could endure it."

THOUGH HE felt deep and grateful affection for Galli, the time had come to establish his own quarters and workshop where he could live quietly. On the Via Sistina, near the Tiber, he found a big corner room with two windows, and a smaller room with a fire-place. Oiled linen on wooden frames served as window coverings; the wooden floor was thin, the ceiling plaster crumbling. He paid a few scudi for two months rent.

At the Gallis' he found Buonarroto, come to pay him a visit. Michelangelo gazed with pleasure at the stubby features; it had been a year since they had seen each other after Lucrezia's death. "You couldn't have come at a better time," he cried. "I need help with my new place."

They bought wood, plaster and whitewash, and went to the Via Sistina, where they set to work at once patching the broken floor and plastering the ceiling. Balducci knew a second-hand furniture dealer with whom he bargained shrilly for a bed with a rope mattress, a table,

two cane chairs, a chest of drawers, a few pots, dishes and knives to furnish the place.

Buonarroto settled Michelangelo in, shopped and cooked the food, cleaned the rooms. The housekeeping went downhill the moment he left. Immersed in his work, growing thin, Michelangelo saw nothing but the huge white block sitting on beams in the centre of the floor. His bed was unmade, the dishes unwashed.

Then, late one afternoon, he answered a knock to see a plain-faced, olive-complexioned lad of about thirteen, holding out a letter from Buonarroto. It introduced one Piero Argiento, who wished to become Michelangelo's apprentice. He had made the long trip from Florence to Rome on foot. Michelangelo invited him in, and the boy told him of his family and their farm near Ferrara.

"Can you read and write, Argiento?"

"The Jesuit Fathers in Ferrara taught me. I want a three-year apprenticeship. With a guild contract."

Michelangelo was impressed by his forthrightness. He gazed into the lad's brown eyes, noted the thin cheeks. "I live simply, Argiento. You can expect no luxury."

"I am of the *contadini*. What there is to eat, we eat."

"Suppose we try it for a few days?"

"Agreed. *Grazie*."

"Take this coin, and go to the market for food."

"I make a good soup-of-the-country."

Argiento left the house before dawn for the markets. Michelangelo was touched by the way he painfully kept his accounts: so many denari for vegetables or meat or *pasta,* every coin accounted for. He was a relentless pursuer of bargains.

They established a routine. After their one-dish midday dinner, Argiento cleaned up and laundered while Michelangelo took a walk along the Tiber, listening to the Sicilians sing as they unloaded the boats. By the time he returned, Argiento was taking his *ripose* on the truckle bed under the wooden sink. Michelangelo had two hours of quiet at his work-bench before Argiento woke and came to the work-table for his daily instruction. At dusk Argiento was back in the kitchen. By the time dark settled in he was asleep again on his truckle bed, while Michelangelo lit a lamp and returned to work on his Pietà.

SEARCH AS he might, he could find no place where the Bible spoke of a moment when Mary could have been alone with Jesus after the descent from the cross. But in his concept there could be no one else present. Perhaps after the soldiers had laid Him on the ground, when Joseph of Arimathea went to Pontius Pilate to ask for Christ's body, Nicodemus was gathering myrrh and aloes, and the others had gone home to mourn. Then she might have held her child. . . . There would be no haloes, no angels; only two human beings whom God had chosen.

But how was Mary to hold Christ on her lap without the relationship seeming ungainly? She would be slender and delicate, yet she must hold this full-grown man securely.

He started by making sketches, walking the streets, watching sweet-faced young nuns. Though this sculpture would show Mary with a grown son, he could not conceive of her as a broken woman in her mid-fifties. His image of the Virgin had always been that of a young woman, like his memory of his mother.

He completed a life-size clay figure, then bought yards of lightweight material, wet the cloth and covered it with moist clay. Each turn of the drapery served organically, to cover the Madonna's slender legs and feet so that they could support Christ's body.

He went into the Jewish quarter in Trastevere, to see how Christ might have looked. The Spanish Inquisition had driven many Jews into Rome. For the most part they were well treated; many were prominent in the Vatican as physicians, musicians, bankers. They did not object to his sketching them at work, but no one would come to his studio to pose.

Finally he was told to ask for Rabbi Melzi. He found the rabbi in his study, a gentle old man with a white beard and luminous grey eyes, reading the Talmud. When Michelangelo explained why he had come, the rabbi replied gravely: "The Bible forbids Jews to make graven images."

"But you don't object to others creating works of art?"

"Not at all. Each religion has its own tenets."

"I am carving a Pietà and I wish to make Jesus a Jew. I am looking for young, strong, intelligent men as models."

Rabbi Melzi smiled at him with old but merry eyes. "Leave me your address. I will send you the best we have to offer."

His first model arrived at dusk. When Michelangelo stretched him over a trestle stand, explaining the pose to him, the man quite plainly thought him crazy; only the instructions from his rabbi kept him from bolting. But when Michelangelo showed him the drawings, with the mother roughed in, holding her son, he helped him to find more models.

Michelangelo spent weeks putting his two figures together: a Mary who would be young and sensitive, yet strong enough to hold her son on her lap; and a Jesus who was strong even in death.

SOMETIMES Michelangelo could not make out who was master and who apprentice. Argiento had been trained rigorously by the Jesuits and Michelangelo was unable to change his habits: up before dawn to market and scrub the floors every day; water boiling on the fire for washing laundry, the pots scoured with river sand after each meal. "Argiento, this is senseless," he complained, not liking to work on the wet floor. "Scrub the studio once a week."

"No," said Argiento stolidly. "Every day, before dawn."

The boy soon became acquainted with the farmers who brought produce into Rome. On Sundays he would walk out to visit them and see their horses. The one thing he missed from his farm in the Po Valley was the animals.

It took a piece of bad luck to show Michelangelo that the boy was devoted to him. He was crouched over his anvil getting his chisels in trim when a splinter of steel flew into his eye. Argiento put him on the bed, brought a pan of hot water, dipped some clean white linen cloth and applied it to extract the splinter. Though the pain was considerable Michelangelo assumed he could blink the splinter out. But it would not come. Argiento never left his side, applying hot compresses throughout the night.

By the second morning Michelangelo was in a panic: he could see nothing out of the eye. At dawn Argiento went to Galli. He arrived with his family surgeon, who carried a cage of pigeons. He told Argiento to take a bird out of the cage, cut a vein under its wing, and let the blood gush into the injured eye. At dusk, the surgeon came back again and cut the vein of a second pigeon, again washed out the eye. All the next day Michelangelo could feel the splinter moving, pushing. By nightfall it was out.

Argiento had not slept for seventy hours.

"You're tired," said Michelangelo. "Take a few days off."

Argiento's face lit up. "I'll go and visit the horses."

The next day, hammer and chisel in hand, Michelangelo broke into his block at the side of the Madonna's head. He turned the block so that the play of light and shadow showed him where he must cast out stone. The weight of the material of the Madonna's head covering, forcing her head downward to the inner hand of Christ that crossed her heart, compelled attention to the body stretched across her lap. Because she was gazing down on her son, all who looked must turn to her face to see the sadness, the compassion for all men's sons. All who saw would feel how heavy was her son's dead body on her lap, how much heavier the burden in her heart. Yet Michelangelo bathed the two figures in tranquillity.

Winter arrived: cold, wet, raw, the roof leaked. They moved the work-bench and bed to dry sections of the room, bought a black iron brazier to put under Michelangelo's work-stool. When his fingers were blue he tried to carve in woollen mittens. He wore a cap over his head and ears. Argiento fell ill, and Michelangelo spent weeks nursing him. He began to worry that he could not finish his Pietà within the allotted year.

By March the *campagna* was flooded with brittle sunlight; and with the warmer weather came Cardinal Groslaye to see how his Pietà was faring.

"Tell me, my son," the cardinal said, "how does the Madonna's face remain young, younger than her son's?"

"Your Grace, it seemed to me that the Virgin Mary would not age. She was pure; she would have kept her freshness of youth."

The answer was satisfactory to the cardinal.

"I hope you will finish in August. It is my dearest wish to hold services in St. Peter's for the installation."

So Michelangelo carved in a fury from first light to dark, then threw himself across his bed, fully clothed. At midnight he got up, nibbled a heel of bread, lit the lamp and tried to throw its light on the area he was carving. The light was too diffused.

He bought some heavy paper, made a hat with a peak, tied a wire round the outside and in the centre fashioned a loop big enough to hold a candle. The light, as he held his face a few inches from the marble,

was bright and steady. The candles burnt quickly, the wax running over the peak of his cap and on to his forehead, but he was delighted with his invention.

One night the door opened to reveal Baglioni and a group of his young friends, holding torches on long poles. "I saw the light," Baglioni said, "and came to see what you were doing at this ungodly hour. What's that stuff all over your eyebrows?"

Michelangelo proudly showed them his cap and candle. Leo and his friends burst into laughter.

"At least use goat's tallow," Leo said. "It's harder; you won't be eating it all night."

Next day, he sent Michelangelo a bundle of candles. He was right; the goat's tallow melted more slowly and remained in a pool where it fell.

He refused all invitations, saw few of his friends now. But one day Paolo Rucellai sent for him. He said, "My cousin has written to tell me that Florence is planning a sculpture competition, *'To bring to perfection the marble column already blocked out by Agostino di Duccio. . . .'*"

"The Duccio block!" Michelangelo began to tremble. "I tried to buy it for my Hercules. I can see it this minute."

"Could you make something good of it?"

Michelangelo's eyes shone. *"Dio mio.* Tell me, what must the theme be: political, religious? Is this for Florentines only? Must I be there to compete?"

"Wait!" cried Rucellai. "The theme has not yet been determined. The competition will take place in 1500."

"Only six months from now! And I have so much to do on the Pietà." His face was anguished. "I cannot rush it."

Paolo put an arm about him. "I will keep you informed."

CARDINAL GROSLAYE lost his race with time: he did not live to see the Pietà completed Galli attended the funeral with Michelangelo, standing below a catafalque sixteen feet long. Returning to the Galli home, Michelangelo said uneasily: "I still have six to eight months of work on my Pietà. Would you send that last hundred ducats to my family?"

Galli looked at him sharply. "I have sent almost all the cardinal's ducats to Florence. This is a bottomless well."

"I want to invest in a shop for my brothers. Buonarroto cannot seem to find a place for himself. Giovansimone, since Savonarola's death, disappears for days. If I shared in the profits"

"Michelangelo, neither of them is a good business man; how are they going to make a profit?" Galli was exasperated. "I can't let you pour your last money down a hole. Eighty per cent of it has gone to your family. I ought to know, I'm your banker."

Nevertheless almost all the money was transferred to Florence. Michelangelo and Argiento went on short rations; their clothing became ragged.

It took a letter from Lodovico to bring him to his senses: *Dearest Son: Buonarroto tells me that you live in great misery. Misery is bad; it is a vice displeasing to God and to man, and also will hurt the soul and the body. Live moderately and abstain from discomfort. Above all, keep your head warm and never wash yourself.*

He went to Rucellai, borrowed twenty-five florins and took Argiento to an inn for *costata alla fiorentina*. Then he bought them each a new set of clothes.

HE WORKED now with his head lower than Mary's, his tools angled upward. He had left behind earlier Pietàs, dark, unforgiving, their message of love blotted out by blood. Here was no sign of violence: Jesus slept peacefully in His mother's arms. Michelangelo projected his deep religious faith into the figures; their harmony portrayed the harmony of God's universe.

When the sculpture was finished, Galli came to the studio and studied it. After a time he said softly, "I have fulfilled my contract with the cardinal: this is the most beautiful marble in Rome."

"Our contract doesn't say that we have the right to put it in St. Peter's," Michelangelo said, "With the cardinal dead"

"We will install it quietly. Once it is in its niche, no one will bother to have it removed. Suppose you hire those stone-yard friends of yours to help you."

Guffatti brought his family: three husky sons and a variety of cousins. They wrapped the Pietà in mangy blankets and carried it, eight strong,



Alinari photo

Pietà. St. Peter's, Vatican City

to an ancient wagon and roped it in. With Michelangelo guarding the tailboard, they made their way cautiously along the cobbled streets to the foot of the thirty-five steps of marble and porphyry leading up to the basilica.

Only the fact that they bore a sacred burden kept them from cursing as they carried it up the long steps, set it down to rest and wipe their brows, then picked it up again to carry it to the church door.

Michelangelo observed that the dilapidated basilica was leaning even more than when he had begun work. It seemed beyond repair. He swallowed hard at the thought of putting his lovely Pietà in it, but he led the Guffattis to the niche in the Chapel of the Kings of France. They unwrapped their bundle and raised the Pietà reverently to its place. Then the Guffattis bought candles and lit them before the statue. They refused to take one scudo for their back-breaking labour. "We take our pay in heaven."

It was the best tribute Michelangelo could receive. It was also the only tribute he received.

He returned to St. Peter's day after day. Few of the city's pilgrims bothered to visit the chapel; few in Rome knew the statue had been installed.

One afternoon he wandered in and saw a family—from Lombardy, he guessed by their dialect—standing in front of his Pietà. He went to their side to eavesdrop.

"I tell you I recognize the work," cried the mother. "It is by that fellow from Osteno, who makes all the tombstones."

Her husband said, "No, no, it is that Cristoforo Solari from Milan. He has done many of them."

That night Michelangelo entered St. Peter's, took a candle and put it in the wire loop of his hat; he took up his hammer and chisel, leaned forward, and on the band going across the Virgin's bosom he cut in swift, decorative letters:



Michelangelo Buonarroti of Florence made this.

He returned to his rooms, despondent. Then he and Argiento packed up, hired mules and set out for Florence.

BOOK SIX
The Giant



BACK IN Florence with no funds, he was obliged to send Argiento to board at his family's farm and go himself to live with his father. Lucrezia's death had aged Lodovico, his face was thin, his cheeks sunken.

As Galli had predicted, nothing had come of the business Michelangelo had set up for his brothers. Buonarroto was working in a wool shop; Giovansimone apathetically took jobs, then disappeared after a few weeks. Sigismondo was earning a few scudi as a professional soldier, Lionardo had disappeared.

Michelangelo climbed the Settignano hills to see the Topolinos. There were now five grandchildren. He learned that Contessina and her husband had been banished from Florence; they lived in a peasant's house in Fiesole.

The city had undergone many changes in the almost five years he had been gone. People bowed their heads in shame when they passed the spot where Savonarola's body had been burnt; at the same time they were trying to replace what Savonarola had destroyed. Artists who had fled the city had returned; they had organized a club called "The Company of the Cauldron," restricted to twelve members. Each was allowed to bring guests to a monthly dinner in the painter Rustici's studio. Granacci was a member and invited Michelangelo to accompany him. Michelangelo refused, preferring to wait until he had a commission.

He went to the Duomo workshop to talk to Beppe and study the thin, seventeen-foot Duccio column. At night he read in the Old Testament, looking for a heroic theme. He heard that many favoured giving the commission to Leonardo da Vinci; but Leonardo had rejected it on the ground that he despised marble sculpture as an inferior art, good only for stone-cutters. Michelangelo, who admired Leonardo's work, was relieved to have him out of the running, but he resented this statement.

One day he went at dawn to the Duomo workshop. The diagonal

beams of first sunlight streamed across the marble, projecting his shadow up the full seventeen-foot height of the column, turning him into a giant. He caught his breath. "This is how David must have felt," he told himself, "on that morning when he stepped forth to face Goliath." He had his theme now: a Giant for the symbol of Florence! For days he drew, seeking a David worthy of the Biblical legend. He submitted design after design to Gonfaloniere Piero Soderini, Governor of Florence; to the Wool Guild; to the Board of Works of the Duomo. But nothing happened, and he was burning up with marble fever.

Jacopo Galli was still working for him in Rome. One day a letter arrived from him, telling Michelangelo that Cardinal Piccolomini was giving him a contract for some statues for his family altar in the cathedral of Siena. "I must warn you," Galli wrote, "that it is not the kind of commission you want or deserve."

Michelangelo's face dropped as he read on to learn that he would have to carve fifteen small figures, all fully clothed, to fit into narrow niches. The pay was five hundred ducats with no advance, and he could take no other contract for three years.

"How do they think you can buy supplies?" Lodovico said, hearing this. "Do they think the money is coming from me?"

"No, Father, I'm sure they know better than that."

"Thanks to God! Galli must make it part of the contract that they advance you one hundred gold ducats."

Michelangelo ran out of the door and hurried to Soderini's office. It was a magnificent room, its ceiling painted with the lilies of Florence, the oaken desk massive. *"Ben venuto,"* Soderini murmured. "What brings you here?"

"Troubles, Gonfaloniere," replied Michelangelo.

"That's why the gonfaloniere sits behind such a capacious desk: so that it can hold all the problems of Florence."

"It is your shoulders that are broad."

Soderini ducked his head deprecatingly. He was not handsome, with his long, pointed chin and hooked nose, but he was an honest man who could induce opposing factions to work together. Michelangelo told him how much he longed to do his Giant, how he disliked the Piccolomini contract.

Soderini said thoughtfully, "This is not a good time to force things.

Cesare Borgia is threatening to conquer Florence. Last night, we bought him off—for thirty-six thousand gold florins."

"Blackmail," said Michelangelo.

Soderini's face turned red. "Many kiss the hand they wish to see cut off. The guilds have to provide this money; so the Wool Guild is hardly in a mood to discuss sculpture. Hadn't you better be more receptive to the Piccolomini offer? For Florence, for you as an artist, one law prevails: survival."

But at Santo Spirito, Prior Bichiellini pushed his papers aside, his eyes blazing. "Survival on what plane? To stay alive as an animal stays alive? For shame! The Michelangelo I knew six years ago could never think, 'Better mediocre work than no work at all.' Don't take the commission. Don't squander these God-given years." Then, as Michelangelo hung his head in shame, he went on quietly, "I moralize only because it is my duty to be concerned with your character."

But in his studio Granacci said, "Without work, Michelagnolo, you are the most wretched creature alive. Do as many figures as you have time for. Then, when something better comes along, take it."

HE RETURNED to the drawing-board, to sketch saints for Cardinal Piccolomini's contract; he finally carved two of the statues, St. Peter and St. Paul, while his sculptor friend Baccio did two more figures for him. This should be enough to earn him a respite. Meanwhile, he could think of nothing but the Duccio column and the Giant David. He remembered David's answer when Saul questioned the wisdom of his challenging Goliath. *My Lord, I used to feed my father's flock; and if lion or bear came and carried off one of my rams, I would go in pursuit, and get the mastery and snatch the prey from their jaws. . . . Lion or bear, my Lord, I would slay them.* "Lion or bear, I would slay them." What strength and courage! Yet earlier artists had shown such delicate, almost feminine Davids.

At dawn he carried his measuring equipment to the Duomo workyard. Other sculptors had now given up on the block; it had been gouged so deeply, midway down its length, that they said it would break in two. He must try to design a David whose thighs, the shortest distance across the body, could be fitted safely into the narrow section of the marble that was left.

"For fifty years I've watched sculptors measure across here," commented Beppe. "Always they say, 'Too bad. No figure will fit.' "

"Look, Beppe. Suppose we swivel the hips *away* from this narrow area, and use a strong, outpushing wrist or hand to compensate?"

Beppe scratched his behind.

"Ah," cried Michelangelo, "you think it might work! I can tell how pleased you are by what part of your anatomy you scratch."

Days passed, and a courier from Rome brought the final Piccolomini contract. Jacopo Galli had secured an advance of a hundred ducats. It contained the crowning indignity: "A figure of St. Francis has already been sculptured by Torrigiani, who left draperies and head unfinished. Michelangelo will complete the statue in Siena. . . ."

"So Torrigiani went to Siena," Michelangelo cried to Granacci. "Think of the ignominy of my scavenging after him!"

"Let's just say that Torrigiani could not finish even one figure adequately, and so the cardinal had to turn to you. Why don't you go to Siena? You'll feel better."

He left that day.

TORRIGIANI had left Siena; Michelangelo finished redesigning his lifeless St. Francis with all the love and skill at his command. Then Soderini sent for him to return at once to Florence: the Wool Guild and the cathedral had finally commissioned his Giant. Soderini told him, "When we realized that our best Florentine carver was bound by a Sienese cardinal, we asked, 'Does Siena suppose that Florence does not appreciate its own artists?' Out of patriotic duty, we ask you to postpone the rest of the Piccolomini contract, and take over the Duccio block."

Fighting down the thought of what the cardinal would think of him, he let joy carry him up the hills to the Topolinos. "Listen," he called out. "The Duccio column—it's mine!"

"We should be able to trust you now with window frames," teased the father.

Michelangelo turned to the mother. "*Madre mia,* how is Contessina?"

"She is frail. People are forbidden to help them." She made the eloquent Tuscan gesture of hopelessness, her hands circling out and down. "The hatred of Piero still poisons."

Michelangelo put wood in the forge, lit it, and fashioned a set of small chisels and hammers. Then, taking a small piece of *pietra serena,* he bade the Topolinos farewell, and rode to Fiesole. He tied his horse to an olive tree on a slope and looked down at the Ridolfi family on the small stone-paved terrace in front of their cottage.

Contessina was sitting on a cane-backed chair, a baby at her breast, a six-year-old playing at her feet. He called softly: "It is I, Michelangelo Buonarroti, come to visit."

Contessina covered her breast. "Michelangelo! Come down, come down. The path is over to the right."

Ridolfi lifted his proud, bitter face in the constrained silence as Michelangelo made his way down the path with the toy chisels, hammers and marble.

"Yesterday I received the Duccio column," he said. "I had to come to tell you. Besides, your eldest son must now be six. It is time he started learning to carve; I shall be his teacher."

Ridolfi's stern mouth twitched with amusement. He said, "You are kind to come to us. You know that we are pariahs."

Ridolfi was short of thirty, but ostracism and bitterness were already ravaging his face. Though he had not been involved in the conspiracy to bring back Piero de' Medici, he was known to despise the Republic.

It was good to be with Contessina again, to gaze into those dark eyes. Had they not loved each other, if only with the love of children? She divined his thoughts; she always had. She turned to her son. "Luigi, would you like to learn to carve?"

"Can I help with the new statue, Michelangelo?"

"I will teach you as Bertoldo taught me in your grandfather's garden. Now, hammer in one hand, chisel in the other——"

It was midnight when he reached home. His father was awake.

"So! Finally you come to your father with the news. What price will they pay? How long will it take to carve?"

"Six florins a month. Two years."

Lodovico said, "But that adds up to only a hundred and forty-four florins."

"The Board will pay more when I'm finished, if in their conscience they think I deserve it."

"Their conscience! Don't you know that a Tuscan's conscience stops



short of his belt? The Piccolomini contract pays more than double this. We cannot afford to make a large charitable contribution to the Wool Guild and the Duomo."

Michelangelo said quietly, "Father, I'm going to carve the David."

But Lodovico continued to complain. Later, Buonarroto asked: "Before the argument, how many florins a month were you planning to pay Father?"

"Three. Half for him, half for me."

"And now you have agreed to give him five."

Michelangelo sighed. "What can I do? He looks so old and white. Besides, the Board is paying my costs. Still, you're right about Father. I am his quarry."

GRANACCI launched a celebration party for Michelangelo at a meeting of the Company of the Cauldron in Rustici's studio. There were chains of sausages, cold beef, sucking pig, demijohns of Chianti. Soggi had contributed an enormous basin of pickled pigs' feet. The entire



Ghirlandaio studio was there, together with the Medici garden apprentices; all the best-known sculptors and painters, craftsmen, architects, government officials, and the Boards of the Wool Guild and the Duomo. The huge assemblage spilt out of Rustici's studio into the square, where acrobats and wrestlers entertained, musicians played, and young people danced. Everyone wrung Michelangelo's hand, pounded him on the back and insisted upon drinking a toast with him. The party lasted until dawn; and before it ended, two incidents occurred which would affect the pattern of Michelangelo's life.

First, the aged painter, Cosimo Roselli announced his resignation from the Company and nominated Michelangelo to succeed him: he was instantly accepted. He had belonged to no group since the Medici sculpture garden. He remembered his lonely childhood, how difficult it had been for him to make friends. Now all the artists of Florence, even those who had long waited to be invited into the Company, were applauding his election.

The second incident was begun, unwittingly, by Leonardo da Vinci. Michelangelo had often seen him around Florence. He carried his head aristocratically, the broad forehead topped by reddish hair worn to his shoulders; and he had a chin carved out of the Carrara marble he despised; a flawless nose, cool blue eyes of a piercing intelligence; and the fair complexion of a country girl. He was always dressed in regal splendour, a rose-coloured cloak, lace about his neck and wrists.

When Michelangelo spoke of this to Rustici, Rustici said, "Don't be fooled by his exterior. Leonardo has a magnificent brain. He is a mathematician, an expert on anatomy, a geologist, an engineer and an inventor. Even now he is completing experiments for a machine that will fly through the air. He dresses like the nobility to try to make the world forget he is the illegitimate son of an innkeeper's daughter. Actually, he is the only man in Florence who works as hard and long as you do."

Now, Michelangelo could hear Leonardo's high-pitched voice declaring: "I refused to compete for the Duccio block because sculpture is a mechanical art. It is much less intellectual than painting. Sculpture is for labourers: sculptors end the day as filthy as plasterers."

A rage rose in Michelangelo, not just for himself but for all sculptors. He took a vow: one day he would make Leonardo eat those words.

NEXT MORNING Beppe gave him a raucous welcome. "So you own the Duccio block. The Board of Works say give him everything he wants: marble, chisels, pretty girls"

Michelangelo laughed, bringing the artisans running. They welcomed him to the yard, and then with block and tackle and rollers moved the two-thousand-pound column to Michelangelo's own section of the yard, by a private gate.

Now he could finally think out his David. He would be the incarnation of everything Lorenzo had fought for: not a sinful creature living only for salvation in the next life, but a man with faith in his own kind, with a brain and will. His David would be the most fully realized man the world had yet seen, functioning in a rational and humane world.

When did David become truly a giant? After killing Goliath? Or at the moment he decided that he must try? For Michelangelo, it was David's decision that made him a giant, not his killing of Goliath. This was the David he was seeking, caught at the exultant height of resolution.

He began to model a clay figure, eighteen inches high, and with astonishing facility he knew where the David lay in his block. Its limitations began to seem assets.

Every now and then he would climb the hill to Fiesole to give Luigi a lesson. He was a bright-faced, handsome child, with Contessina's alert mind.

"You are wonderful with Luigi," she remarked. "Some time you must have your own son."

He shook his head. "Like most artists, I wander: to Rome, Siena, Bologna. That is no life for a family."

"It goes deeper than that," said Contessina in her small, sure voice. "Marble is your marriage. The Bacchus, Pietà, David are your children. But while you are here, Luigi will be your son."

MEANTIME Guiliano da Sangallo had returned to Florence. "Have you heard of any architectural jobs here?" he asked.

"Design me a revolving table strong enough to turn a two-thousand-pound column of marble," said Michelangelo, "so that I can control the light on my work. And a fifteen-foot scaffold in which I can change the height and work all round the block."

Sangallo was amused. "Let's get pen and paper. What you need is a series of four towers, with open shelves that take planks from either direction. As for your turntable"

BEPPE'S CREW roped the column, attached a block and tackle and slowly raised it to stand upright on Sangallo's turntable. Michelangelo and Argiento then built the scaffold towers.

Now the column cried out to him. His tools tore into it, searching for elbows, thighs, chest. The white crystals that had lain dormant for half a century yielded to every touch, from the subtlest nuance to the driving "Go!" in which his hammer and chisel swept upward from the ankle past the knee and thigh without stopping.

This was his most glorious experience in working marble; he could not bring himself to stop for food or change of clothes. He fed his marble hunger twenty hours a day, the acrid dust coagulating in his nostrils, his hair white with it, the vibrations running from the chisels and hammer through his body long after he had thrown himself across his bed in exultant exhaustion.

At Christmas, he accompanied his family to High Mass at Santa Croce; the New Year he ignored. Argiento turned the table to catch the light, moved the plank platform up and down, forward and back as Michelangelo worked the four sides of the frame simultaneously. The neck was so tremendous he could work it without fear of the head breaking off.

Soderini came into the yard to observe progress. He knew that Michelangelo would have no peace at home until a price was set on the finished David. Towards the middle of February, he suggested that the Boards see the work. They came and were pleased. They gave Michelangelo four hundred florins with the stipulation that he complete the work to perfection within two years. "Now I can forget money," Michelangelo said. "That is paradise."

The figure began to push out of its mass, striving to define itself in space. His own pace matched the drive of the material, so that Soderini, visiting him on a Sunday afternoon, was staggered by his passion. "I've been watching fragments hurled four feet in the air," he said, "until I thought the whole marble would fly to pieces."

The one thorn in Michelangelo's flesh was Leonardo da Vinci's constant belittling of the sculptor's art. But one day he learned that Leonardo, together with Torrigiani and Piero de' Medici, had joined the army of Cesare Borgia, who was helping to incite a rebellion in Tuscany against Florentine rule.

Michelangelo was outraged. "He's a traitor," he cried angrily to Rustici.

Rustici shook his head wistfully.

"You two stand like the Apennines above the rest of us, yet you hate each other. It doesn't make sense. Or does it?"

TOWARDS THE end of April, Soderini asked Michelangelo if he would carve the Twelve Apostles in marble for the Duomo.

Michelangelo said, "But it's a lifetime of work!"

"So were Ghiberti's doors. It would make you the official sculptor of Florence. The contract includes a house and studio."

"A house of my own!"

"I thought that would please you. You could do one Apostle a year; each year, you would own another twelfth of your house."

Michelangelo went to Sangallo, who said, "You can't turn down the Florentine government. Take the contract, build your house, carve as many Apostles as you can. When you've finished, simply buy the rest of the house in cash."

"Another Piccolomini contract," said Michelangelo mournfully, thinking of all he had already promised to do.

But next day he signed the papers. He returned home to find the Buonarroti excitedly planning their new house. "Get it built quickly," said his father. "The faster we move in, the sooner we stop paying rent here."

Michelangelo spoke without emotion.

"This is to be my home. And my workshop. It is not to be the family residence."

There was a stunned silence. Then his father, uncle and aunt all began talking at once.

"But your home is our home. We can save rent. Who will cook and clean"

The storm lasted the rest of the day, but Michelangelo was adamant; the least he could get out of the contract was privacy.

THE FIRST fruit of his contract to become Florence's official sculptor was a visit from Agnolo Doni, whom he had known as a boy. Doni had made a fortune in the wool business, and risen so high in the social world of Florence that he was now engaged to Maddalena Strozzi. He wanted Michelangelo to do a Holy Family as a wedding present for his bride-to-be.

Michelangelo flushed with pleasure; Maddalena had been brought up with his statue of Hercules in the Strozzi *palazzo*.

"A Holy Family in marble . . ." he mused.

"Who said anything about marble?" Doni said. "That would cost a lot. I want a painting."

"But why come to me for a painting? I haven't painted for years."

"Pure loyalty. We are of the same quarter. What do you say? Thirty florins. Ten for each figure. That's generous, isn't it?"

"I don't know how much a painter would charge you, Doni."

"Look, Buonarroti. I want you to paint it. It is well known that to carve marble is to be only a fraction of an artist."

"Enough." Michelangelo was furious at this echoing of Leonardo. "I'll paint it. For one hundred gold florins."

"One hundred!" screamed Doni. "How can you cheat one of your oldest friends? The playmate of your youth!"

They compromised on seventy florins; but by the crafty smile in Doni's shrewd eyes, Michelangelo perceived that Doni had out-shouted him and would have paid the hundred.

He had been an idiot to let the man goad him into this; yet his interest was piqued. A Holy Family, he thought, should be earthy, a family of simple people.

He tramped the roads of Tuscany on hot summer days, sketching the farmers in the fields, the country mothers nursing their young. He drew for his Holy Family a strong-limbed young girl, a red-cheeked child, a

bearded grandfather, put them in an affectionate grouping on the grass. To amuse himself, he painted a sea on one side of the family, mountains on the other; then he drew five nude youths, like a Greek frieze behind them.

Doni's face went red when he saw the picture.

"Show me one thing that is holy about this picture of peasants! One sentiment that is religious! You're mocking me! I cannot give this picnic on the grass to my delicate bride."

"Remember, you did not reserve the right of rejection."

Doni's eyes narrowed to slits. He cried in horror: "What are those five naked boys doing in my Holy Family?"

"They've just come out from a swim in the sea," replied Michelangelo calmly. "If I wanted to be greedy I could charge you fifty florins extra for them. But I won't, because we are of the same quarter."

Doni stormed out.

The next day his servant arrived with a pouch of thirty-five florins, half the agreed price. Michelangelo sent Argiento back with the pouch and a note: *The Holy Family will now cost you one hundred and forty florins.*

Florence placed bets on who would win, with Michelangelo on the short end of the odds because no one had ever bested Doni. However, he had bragged all over the town that he was having Florence's official artist paint a wedding gift for his bride. He came to the Duomo with a purse of seventy florins, crying: "Here's your money, give me my painting."

"Doni, you hate the picture," replied Michelangelo. "I'll release you from your agreement."

"Don't try to outwit me. I'll force you to fulfil your contract. You agreed to paint the picture for seventy."

"And you reopened the negotiations by offering me thirty-five florins. My price is now one hundred and forty."

"I'll see you hanged from the Bargello first," screamed Doni.

Michelangelo decided he had had his fun, was about to send the painting to Doni when a boy brought him a note: *Maddalena wants your painting. She has said no wedding present will please her more. Contessina.*

He chuckled, sat down at his work-bench, and wrote a note to Doni:

As an old friend, I will release you from any financial embarrassment by giving the Holy Family to another friend.

Doni came running, and poured the hundred and forty gold pieces on to the work table. He picked up the painting and left, grumbling, "Artists! Supposed to be impractical. Ha!"

Michelangelo gathered up the coins. He had enjoyed the whole affair. It was as refreshing as a holiday.

THERE WAS rejoicing in August when the Borgia Pope, Alexander VI, died. But when Cardinal Piccolomini was elected to the papacy, Michelangelo was apprehensive. He had done no further work on the Piccolomini statues. One word from the new Pope, and he would have to leave the David until the figures were completed.

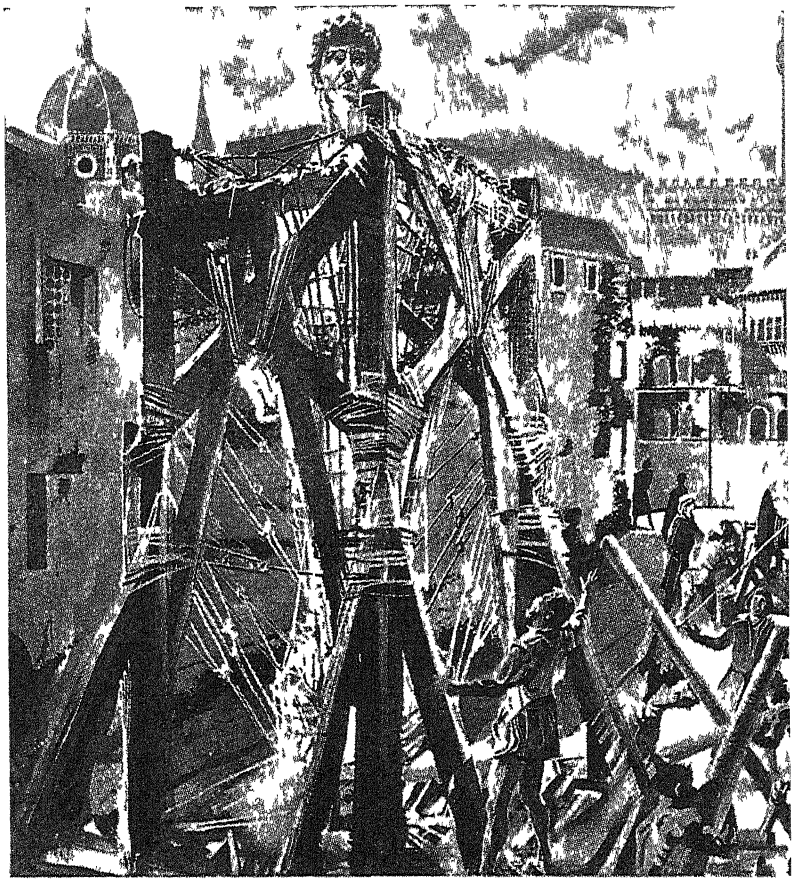
For a month he worked in a frenzy. Only David's head remained. Then he was saved. Piccolomini died at the end of one month as Pope Pius III, and Cardinal Rovere was elected Pope Julius II.

Leonardo da Vinci returned from Cesare Borgia's army. At once, he was awarded a commission to create a fresco for the Great Hall of the Signoria. The payment was to be ten thousand florins!

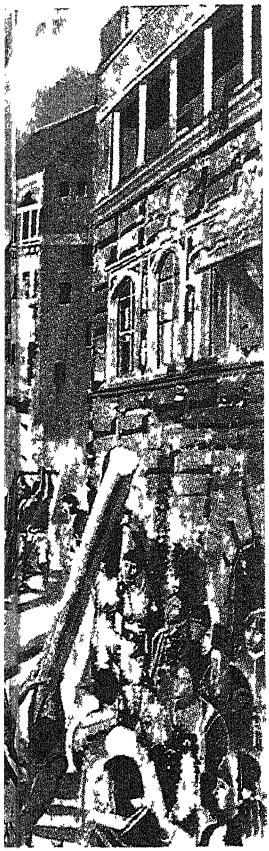
Michelangelo was livid. This was the largest and most important painting commission given by Florence in decades. Ten thousand to Leonardo for a fresco! Four hundred to him for the Giant David! Leonardo—who would have helped Cesare Borgia conquer Tuscany!

He ran in his rage to Soderini's office. Soderini heard him out; he also allowed a few moments of silence for Michelangelo to hear his angry words echoing off the walls before answering: "Leonardo is the greatest painter in Italy. I have seen his Last Supper in Milan. Frankly, I covet it. If he paints a fresco for Florence, it will enrich us all enormously."

Reproved and dismissed, Michelangelo went back to his David. Winter came on, and in January 1504 he learned that Piero de' Medici had drowned while fighting with the French army against Spain, in the hope of securing French help against Florence. Michelangelo had a moment of pity as he remembered Lorenzo, on his death-bed, telling Piero how to rule Florence. Then he was conscious that Piero's death meant that Contessina was nearer to being released from her exile.



He concentrated on finishing his David, and a committee of artists decided that it should be placed in front of the Signoria The statue was to be carried upright, in a sling, inside a big wooden frame Encased in a net of enormous ropes, lifted by grapples, it was moved suspended inside the open cage The wall behind the work-shed was ripped out, the cage raised on to round logs for its mile-long journey through the streets Forty men dragged the huge crate, moving it but a few feet an hour, with hundreds of people watching the procession They had manoeuvred only as far as a sharp



turn into the Via del Proconsolo when darkness fell Next morning, work started again and went on all day and the next day It was the evening of the fourth day when the David finally arrived at its destination at the foot of the Signoria steps There it stood in all its majestic grace, lighting up the Signoria with pure white light Michelangelo stood below the figure, feeling insignificant, and powerless now that the statue was out of his hands

Next morning he woke refreshed and returned to the Signoria A crowd was standing below the David in silence Fluttering from the statue were pieces of paper stuck to the marble He had seen this sight in Rome, when people had pasted up verses denouncing the Borgias on the door of the Vatican, or affixed their smouldering complaints to a statue

He walked through the crowd, trying to read their expressions When he came to the David, he climbed up on the base and began taking off the papers His eyes began to mist as he read them *You have given us back our self-respect*

We are proud to be Florentines. . . How magnificent is man!

His eye caught a familiar handwriting He read *Everything my father hoped to accomplish for Florence is expressed in your David C*

Contessina had made her way into the city at night, past the guards She had taken the risk to join her voice to that of Florence

He turned to the crowd gazing up at him There was silence in the square, and yet he felt complete communication, as though they read each other's thoughts They were a part of him, every Florentine standing below, eyes turned up to him, and he was a part of them.

MEANWHILE, his house was being planned and the Topolinos were soon cutting *pietra serena* according to his specifications. When the

blocks were ready the entire family built the house on a corner site in Florence beside a monastery. Michelangelo painted the interior walls in warm blues, rose and orange, hung his earliest Madonna and Child in his bedroom and installed his Centaurs in the family-room.

He worked joyfully now on a St. Matthew for the Duomo, on a new Madonna and Child commissioned by some cloth merchants of Bruges. These smaller, compact figures came almost without effort after the overpowering massiveness of the David.

Prior Bichiellini came to give Michelangelo's new house the traditional blessing. He knelt, spoke a prayer to the Madonna. Then he rose, put both hands on Michelangelo's shoulders. "This Madonna could not have evolved in such tender purity if you were not pure in heart. Bless you and this workshop."

After that came the happiest time he had known. Cesare Borgia, seriously ill, had ceased to be a menace to Florence. There was a spirit of confidence and energy in the air. Trade was booming; the government under Soderini was stable and secure. Michelangelo's David, called the Giant by most Florentines, was accepted by the city as its new symbol and protector. A few months short of thirty, Michelangelo seemed to have reached the full expression and acceptance for which he had yearned.

But in May Leonardo da Vinci, rebuked by the Signoria for neglecting his fresco, had started to work on the cartoon for it in earnest. The cartoon quickly became the talk of Florence: artists flocked to it to study, admire, copy. Word went round the city that something wondrous was in the making. Michelangelo began to perceive that he was being superseded. Florence proudly proclaimed Leonardo "the first artist of Tuscany."

This was bitter medicine to Michelangelo. He went to see the Leonardo cartoon for the Battle of Anghiari: it was tremendous! Leonardo, who loved horses, had created a masterpiece of the horse at war, ridden by men in ancient Roman armour, men and horses alike caught up in bloodthirsty conflict.

Michelangelo was forced to admit that Leonardo was a great painter, perhaps the greatest the world had yet seen. Instead of reconciling him, this inflamed him the more. He knew that he himself was the best draughtsman in all Italy, but he would have to prove it. Leonardo's

fresco was to occupy the right half of the eastern wall of the Great Hall. He would ask Soderini for the left half. Then Florence could say who was the first artist of the time!

When he presented himself at Soderini's office and told him why he had come, Soderini cried, "But that is unreasonable! You've told me yourself that you never liked fresco."

"But I can paint fresco better than Leonardo," he said doggedly. "This would be a great *palio* between us, a race."

Soderini shook his head. "You already have a contract with the Wool Guild and Duomo to carve the Twelve Apostles. That's why we built you that house and studio."

"I'll carve them. But the other half of the wall must be mine. You are a wise and persuasive gonfaloniere who will persuade the city to appropriate another ten thousand florins for my painting."

To persuade the Signoria to spend this sum, and to delight the Wool and Duomo Boards enough to release him from his contract for a year, he knew he would have to paint a scene of Florentine pride and glory. He remembered a scene from Florence's conquest of Pisa. The Florentine forces had stopped on the bank of the Arno on a hot summer day. A number of soldiers, having shed their heavy armour, were bathing in the river, while others were sun-bathing on the grass.

Suddenly a guard cried: "We are lost! The Pisans are about to attack!"

The Florentines scrambled out of the river to find their armour, their weapons, in time to beat back the Pisan attacks.

He went to the Street of the Stationers, bought the largest squares of paper he could find. Three days later he fitted together on the floor beside Soderini's desk a dozen large sheets with twenty male figures, drawn with bold slashing lines. Soderini studied the drawings in silence. When he looked up, Michelangelo recognized the affectionate regard in which Soderini held him.

"I was wrong to discourage you. This fresco can be as revolutionary as the David. I'm going to get you this commission."

And so he did, for a sum of three thousand florins, less than a third of Leonardo da Vinci's pay.

He set to work at once on the cartoon he called "The Bathers." By New Year's Day, only three months after he had started, it was



Alinari photo

David· Accademia, Florence

completed. Argiento, Granacci and Michelangelo stretched and tacked it to a light frame against the back wall. It filled the room with desperately challenged men, with fear, terror, hopelessness; but all the manly emotions surging upward to overcome surprise and disaster by swift purposeful action.

Painters came to see the miracle he had wrought. Ghirlandaio's son, Ridolfo, and Andrea del Sarto asked if they might sketch; and one day a young man named Raphael Sanzio appeared. Michelangelo liked Raphael immediately. He had a sensitive and patrician face, yet altogether manly. He said: "This makes painting a different art. I shall have to start all over again. What I have learned from Leonardo is no longer sufficient."

He asked if he might move his materials in and work in front of the cartoon.

Without willing it, Michelangelo found himself at the head of a school of talented young apprentices.

It was at this moment that a summons to Rome arrived from Pope Julius II.

It was a bad time for him to leave, for he wanted to transfer the cartoon to the Signoria wall; he must also carve the Apostle Matthew to start to pay for his house.

He reported the summons to Soderini, who said: "You cannot refuse the Pope. His friendship is important to Florence. We will hold your contracts in abeyance while you are gone. When you start the Apostles again, you shall have your house back."

MICHELANGELO had only to enter Rome's Porta del Popolo to see and smell the startling changes. Gaping walls and abandoned houses had been torn down so that the streets could be widened and repaved; the swine market had been cleaned out of the Roman forum. New buildings were under construction.

He found Giuliano da Sangallo, who had been called to Rome several months earlier, living in one of the many palaces belonging to Pope Julius II. A big music-room had been converted into a draughtsmen's workshop. Here half a dozen young apprentices were working on plans for rebuilding Rome.

Sangallo, now official architect of Rome, appeared twenty years

younger than when Michelangelo had last seen him: he had the air of a man fulfilling himself.

"I have waited these many months to welcome you to Rome," he said. "The Holy Father is eager to see you."

"I still don't know what the Pope wants me to carve!"

"A tomb. Not just *a* tomb; his own tomb."

"A tomb!" groaned Michelangelo. "Oh no!"

"The Holy Father wants you to carve more than thirty heroic marbles. You'll be the first sculptor to have that many in one place since Phidias did the Parthenon frieze."

Sangallo took him to see Julius II, who was sitting on an enormous purple-backed throne, surrounded by his secretary, two Masters of Ceremonies, cardinals, bishops and ambassadors, all waiting their turn for a private word.

The sixty-two-year-old pontiff, a member of the great Rovere family, was the first Pope to wear a beard, now streaked with white. He was an honest, blunt, hot-tempered man; Michelangelo felt his enormous energy as he waved them in. They knelt and kissed his ring. "I have seen your Pietà in St. Peter's," the Pope said. "That is where I wish my tomb to be erected."

"Could Your Holiness stipulate where in St. Peter's?"

"In the centre," Julius replied coldly.

"Would you speak, Holy Father, about your wishes for the tomb? I must build on the foundation of Your Holiness's desires."

This remark pleased Julius. He began pouring out plans, ideas. "I desire a bronze frieze round all four sides of the tomb. Bronze is best for story-telling; through it you can relate the important episodes of my life."

Michelangelo locked his teeth, wanting to exclaim, "To tell stories is for those who sing ballads." But he said nothing.

Next morning he walked to St. Peter's, overjoyed to see that it was now securely braced. He went to see his Pietà, and ran his finger tips over it; it was warm to his touch. Then he entered the main basilica, gazing at the altar in the centre, under which was the tomb of St. Peter. He walked about, wondering where in the central nave there could be a place for Julius's tomb among the ninety-two other Popes buried there.

He entered a room at an inn, and set to work designing the tomb, a three-storied affair thirty-six feet long, twenty-three feet wide, thirty feet high.

Moses, the lawgiver, symbolizing the maturity of man, would occupy one corner of the first story; in the opposite corner he would put the Apostle Paul, who had laid the foundations of the Church. These two would dominate the tomb.

On the level above them would be four male Captives, shoulders and heads towering over the columns to which they were bound. There would be figures of Victors too, the uncrushables, struggling, hoping, conquering.

The story-telling bronze frieze would be a narrow band. The true frieze would be these magnificent nude figures extending round the four sides of the tomb.

His agent, Jacopo Galli, was furious at this elaborate concept. "Who is to carve these cherubs below the Victors?" he asked. "And these angels holding up the Pope's sarcophagus? You would have to hire a whole studio full of helpers; then your own good figures will be surrounded by so much mediocrity they will be lost. And these endless chains of decorative sausages"

"They're rows of garlands."

"And why a bronze frieze on a marble tomb?"

"The Pope wanted it."

"And if the Pope wants you to stand on your head in the Piazza Navona, you'll do that too?" Then Galli's manner softened. He said, "*Caro mio,* how many statues alone are indicated here?"

"About forty."

"How long did you carve on the Pietà?"

"Two years."

"The David?"

"Three."

"Then these forty figures on the tomb will take you between eighty and a hundred years."

"I've learned my craft and can work fast. I'll be all right."

Galli shot him a piercing look. "Will you? Let's make sure." He reached for a batch of papers. "Here are the contracts I drew up for the Pietà, and the Piccolomini altar. We'll take the best clauses from

each." He glanced through the contracts. "Now, if I know the Pope, he will want the tomb completed immediately. Hold out for ten years, more if you can. As for price, he drives a hard bargain because he is financing an army. Don't take a scudo less than twenty thousand ducats."

When he next visited the Pope, Michelangelo was taken aback to find Sangallo's rival, the architect Bramante, there. He disliked at first sight the pale-green eyes, snub nose and rosebud mouth; the bull-neck and heavy shoulders. He felt uneasy; why should the architect Bramante examine sculpture drawings?

Julius spread the sketches eagerly before him. "It is even more imposing than I had dreamed," he said. "Bramante, will it not be the most beautiful mausoleum in Rome?"

"In all Christendom, Holy Father," replied Bramante.

"Buonarroti, Sangallo says you wish to choose the marbles yourself in Carrara. Set out immediately. One thousand ducats will be given to you for the purchase of the stones."

There was a moment of silence.

Michelangelo asked respectfully, "And for the sculpturing, Your Holiness?"

"The Papal Treasurer will pay you ten thousand ducats when the tomb is completed."

Michelangelo gulped, heard Galli's voice . . . but how could he demand double what the Holy Father had offered? The thousand ducats would barely pay for the marble and get it to Rome. But he wanted to carve these marbles!

"Holy Father, may I speak of the time for completion? If I could have a minimum of ten years——"

"Impossible!" thundered Julius. "It is my dearest wish to see the tomb completed. I will grant you five years."

Forty marble carvings in five years! But one could no more bargain with the pontiff over time than over money. He would manage. . . . He had the power of ten ordinary sculptors. He bowed his head. "All will be done, Holy Father, as you say. And now may I presume to ask that a contract be drawn up?"

There was a peculiar silence. The Pope glared, then replied only: "You and Sangallo must visit St. Peter's now to determine the proper

place for the tomb. Bramante will accompany you, to give you the benefit of his advice."

The three men soon found that there was simply no room in the basilica for so imposing a tomb. They went outside. At the back were a number of possible buildings, built over the centuries since St. Peter's had first been erected by Constantine in 319. "But for a tomb as original as yours," said Sangallo, "we must have a new building, designed to fit the tomb."

Hope revived in Michelangelo's bosom.

"I will design it," Sangallo continued. "Here on this eminence there is sufficient space if we clear out these wooden structures and decaying shrines. It would be visible from the city below."

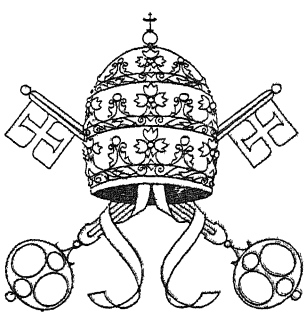
To Michelangelo's surprise, Bramante's eyes were sparkling with approval.

"You like the idea, Bramante?" he asked.

"He is right. What is needed is a beautiful new church."

Sangallo beamed with pleasure. But when Michelangelo turned to Bramante to thank him, the architect's eyes had gone opaque, and there was a twitching at one corner of his mouth.

BOOK SEVEN
The Pope



He had no way of knowing, during his stay in the mountains of Carrara, that his years of relative peace were over. He returned to Rome at the end of 1505 to find that Jacopo Galli had died during his absence; how different Rome felt without him!

He desperately missed his friend's counsel now, for a war between himself and the Pope had begun. Bramante had persuaded Julius to abandon the idea of a separate chapel for his tomb; instead a new St. Peter's was to rise on the hill, incorporating the old one, the design to be chosen through public competition. Michelangelo had spent the Pope's entire thousand ducats on marble and shipping, and

Julius refused to give him more money until he had seen one of the statues. When Julius provided him with a house, he was told he would have to pay several ducats a month for its use.

"Could I wait until I am paid something by the Holy Father before I pay rent?" he asked caustically.

The Guffattis came with the family wagon to carry his marble from the docks to the back portico of the house. Michelangelo paid them out of a loan from Balducci, Galli's successor as manager-owner of the bank. Sangallo recommended an elderly carpenter named Cosimo as Michelangelo's assistant. His cooking tasted of resin and shavings, but he helped Michelangelo build a wooden model of the first two floors of the tomb.

A young muralist named Piero Roselli joined the establishment. Twice a week he went to the market to buy clams, mussels, shrimp, squid and sea bass, cooking cacciucco, a spicy fish stew, over the fire.

To buy a forge, Swedish iron and chestnut for his tools, Michelangelo had to ask Balducci for more money. "I don't mind making a second loan," said Balducci. "But when do you expect to put this tomb on a business-like basis?"

"As soon as I have some carving to show the Pope."

"But that could take months! Be sensible, go to the Pope. From a bad paymaster, get what you can."

But Sangallo did not think it a good time to ask the Pope for money because he was busy judging the plans for St. Peter's. As it turned out, Sangallo lost the commission, which went to Bramante. Bramante bought an old palace close to the Vatican, and rebuilt it with simple elegance.

Leo Baglioni took Michelangelo there. The place was already jammed with courtiers from the Vatican, princes of the Church, nobles, artists, merchants, bankers. Bramante held court, his green eyes crackling with triumph.

Baglioni and Michelangelo went to Bramante's work-room to see his drawings for the new St. Peter's. Michelangelo gasped: it was an edifice to dwarf the Duomo, yet of an elegant, lyrical design, noble in conception.

By comparison Sangallo's entry in the competition, a dome over a square, seemed ponderous.

That night, as he lay cold and sleepless in his bed, it became obvious to him that the chapel for the Julius tomb would never be built. Bramante had used Sangallo's and Michelangelo's ideas for his own purpose: the building of a new cathedral. St. Peter's would be a glorious abode for the tomb.

But would Bramante allow it there?

In spite of his worries, Michelangelo instructed the Guffatti family to set three giant columns upright for the Moses and the Captives. Pope Julius and Bramante would lay the corner-stone of the new St. Peter's on April 18.

When workmen began digging the wide hole into which the Pope would descend to bless the laying of the first stone, Michelangelo realized that the sacred old basilica, instead of being incorporated in it, would be demolished to make room for the new church.

He was outspoken in his disapproval: he felt that it was sacrilege to destroy the earliest temple of Christendom in Rome. Finally, Baglioni warned him that some of Bramante's coterie were saying that unless he stopped attacking their friend his tomb might be built before that of the Pope.

Bills continued to mount, and finally Michelangelo was forced to approach Pope Julius again. His bristling beard protruding from a high ermine collar, Julius sat in his throne-room surrounded by courtiers. Beside him was a jeweller, whom he scolded and sent abruptly away. When the gem-cutter had retired, Michelangelo made his plea.

"Return on Monday," said the Pope curtly.

He had been dismissed like the tradesman! He went to Baglioni, who told him: "Bramante has now convinced the Pope that it is bad luck to build his own tomb, that it could hasten the day when it has to be used."

Michelangelo was breathing hard.

"What shall I do?"

"Go back on Monday as though nothing had happened."

He went back on Easter Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. Each time he was received coolly, told to return. On Friday the guard flatly refused him entrance. He walked home, sat at his table and scrawled:

Most Blessed Father, I have been turned out of the palace today by

your orders; therefore, if you want me, you must look for me elsewhere than in Rome.

He sent the letter to the Pope.

That night he hired a horse and left for Florence. At the rise north of town where he had caught his first glimpse of Rome, he turned to gaze back at the sleeping city. Into his mind came a Tuscan adage, born of centuries of feuds:

How much the fool who goes to Rome
Excels the fool who stays at home....

On the second day he was resting at an inn at Poggibonsi when he heard thunderous hoofs storming up the road. It was Baglioni at the head of a party of five guards. He went to meet him. "Leo! What brings you to Poggibonsi?"

"You! The Holy Father knew we were friends."

"I'm on my way home to Florence," Michelangelo said.

"No, you're not! I bring you a letter from Pope Julius. He commands you to return under penalty of disgrace. If you do, all will be set right. I have the Holy Father's word for it."

"The Holy Father has lapses of memory."

A burly guard asked, "Shall we truss him up, Messer Baglioni?"

"I was not instructed to use force. Michelangelo, you're not the first to be kept waiting by a Pope. If Julius says, 'Wait!' you wait, if it takes a year."

"I'm going back to Florence for good. I will not allow any man to treat me so."

Leo came close, so that the guards could not hear. "Bravo, Florentine! You sound like Marzocco, your heraldic lion. But now that you have asserted your independence, come back. Do not put me in a difficult position."

Baglioni was a good friend, but no one should ask another man to surrender his pride. He told Leo so.

Baglioni's face became stern. "It is impossible to defy the pontiff. You will see, now or later. And later could be worse. I urge you not to match your will against his."

"If I return now I lose everything. But if he wishes it, I'll sculpture his tomb under the shadow of the Signoria tower."

HE TOOK over his old room in his father's house. The marble for his Apostle Matthew was safe in a Duomo work-shed; his cartoon for The Bathers, in the Palazzo della Signoria.

The news of the exchange in the yard of the Poggibonsi inn took only a few hours to make its way over the mountain. When he and Granacci reached Rustici's studio for supper with the Company of the Cauldron, he found himself a hero. But the following morning he learned that the Florentine government did not agree. Soderini's face was grave when he received Michelangelo. "You're the first Florentine to defy a Pope since Savonarola," he said. "I'm afraid your fate will be the same."

"You mean I'll be hanged from a gibbet, and then burnt?"

Soderini smiled. "You are not guilty of heresy, only of disobedience. But in the end the Pope will have his way."

"But all I want to do is settle down in Florence. I'll start the St. Matthew tomorrow so that I can have my house back."

"Florence cannot renew your sculpture contract. No one can employ you now without incurring the Pope's enmity."

"What about The Bathers? Can't I do my fresco?"

Soderini looked at him. "You have not been in the Great Hall? Let us go there at once."

When he saw Leonardo's great fresco, Michelangelo's hand swung to his mouth. *"Dio mio,* no!" Its entire lower half was in ruin, the colours having run downward: horses, men, trees, rocks flowed into each other in an indistinguishable chaos of colour.

All the antagonism washed away in Michelangelo. He felt only deep regret for a fellow artist who had created mightily for a whole year of his life, only to have the results wiped out.

"Leonardo was determined to revive ancient encaustic painting," Soderini said, "using colours mixed with wax and then fused by heat. He applied the heat by lighting fires on the floor. He had tried it on a small mural in Santa Maria Novella, and it had worked well. But this mural is twenty-two feet high, and in order for the heat to reach the upper portion, he had to heap on the fuel. The intense heat on the lower half caused the wax to run."

Michelangelo went to offer his condolences to Leonardo and to apologize for his remarks in the past. Leonardo's initial coolness thawed as

Michelangelo spoke. "You were provoked by my remarks about marble carvers," he said. "I saw your cartoon for The Bathers. It will become a glory of Florence."

"I've lost all interest in the fresco, now that your Battle of Anghiari cannot be fought beside mine."

Two days later Soderini sent for him to read him a letter from the Pope, demanding that the Signoria return Michelangelo to Rome at once, under pain of pontifical displeasure.

"I had better keep going north," replied Michelangelo mournfully; "maybe to France."

"You can't run away. The Pope's arm reaches all over Europe."

"Why am I so precious to him now?"

"Because, having repudiated his service, you become the most desirable artist in the world. But don't push him too far."

A month later, Soderini summoned him to hear an official message from the Pope:

"Michelangelo, the sculptor, who left us without reason, and in mere caprice, is afraid, as we are informed, of returning, though we for our part are not angry with him, knowing the humours of such men of genius. . . . If he returns to us, he shall be uninjured and unhurt, retaining our apostolic favour in the same measure as he formerly enjoyed it." Soderini put the letter down.

"Does that satisfy you?"

"No. Last night I met a Florentine merchant who lives in Turkey. He says I could go out there and work for the Sultan."

His brother Lionardo came to see him.

"Michelangelo, I want to help you," he said. "Let me first admit that you were right in following your art. Our brothers in Rome speak reverently of your Pietà. You have been worshipping God in your own way. Forgive my trespass against you."

"You are forgiven, Lionardo."

"I must remind you that the Pope is the Viceroy of God on earth. When you disobey His Holiness you disobey God."

"Was that true when Savonarola fought Alexander VI?"

Lionardo let the black cowl slip forward to mask his eyes. "Savonarola disobeyed. No matter what we think of a Pope, he is the descendant of St. Peter."

"Popes are men, Lionardo. I have to do what I feel is right. I believe God loves independence more than He does servility."

"You must be right," said Lionardo, "or He would not help you carve such divine marbles."

Sadly, Lionardo said farewell. They were never to meet again.

The only one who was not frightened for him was Contessina. She had seen her family driven out of the city it had helped make the greatest in Europe, her home sacked by fellow townsmen; she herself had been exiled for eight years. She had little respect for officialdom. But her husband wanted to get to Rome; therefore he did not wish to offend the Pope.

"It is with reluctance, Buonarroti," he said one day at their villa, "that I must ask you not to come here again. It is too dangerous now to see you."

"Being born into this world is the primary danger," observed Contessina. "Everything after that is a game of cards."

"I will not come again, Messer Ridolfi," said Michelangelo quietly. "You must protect your family. It was thoughtless of me."

IN LATE August Julius left Rome with an army of five hundred knights and nobles to reconquer Papal Territories in alien hands. He made a bloodless conquest of Perugia, bribed the Cardinal of Rouen to send away eight thousand French troops protecting Bologna by offering cardinals' hats to the cardinal's three nephews, and marched into the city.

Meanwhile, he had not forgotten his errant sculptor. At the Palazzo della Signoria, Soderini shouted at Michelangelo: "We do not wish to go to war on your account! The Holy Father wants you in Bologna. Go!"

Michelangelo knew he was beaten. As the Pope's swollen and confident army advanced through Umbria, reconquering it for the Papal State, the people in the streets began turning their heads when Michelangelo passed. Florence had no defence and desperately needed the Pope's friendship. The whole city was determined that Michelangelo be sent back to the Pope. And they were right: Florence came first. He would go to Bologna, make his peace with the Holy Father. Soderini gave him a letter to his brother, the Cardinal of Volterra, who was with

the Pope: *We assure Your Lordship that Michelangelo is a good young man, and unique in his art. . . . He is such that, using good words and kind manners, one can obtain everything from him; one must be tender and kind to him, and he will do such things that anyone who sees them will be amazed.*

It was November. The streets of Bologna were crowded with people who had thronged to the court of the Pope. Michelangelo found the pontiff at dinner in a banner-hung hall. When Pope Julius looked up and saw him, the whole hall fell silent. The two men glared at each other, their eyes flashing fire. Michelangelo threw his shoulders back, refusing to kneel.

The Pope said: "You have delayed long! We have been obliged to come to meet you!"

This was true: the Pope had travelled a good many more miles than he had.

He said stubbornly, "Holy Father, I did not deserve the treatment I received in Rome in Easter week."

A bishop, attempting to intervene on Michelangelo's behalf, stepped forward.

"Holiness, one must be indulgent towards artists. They understand nothing outside their trade, and often lack good manners."

Julius rose. He thundered:

"How dare you say of this man things that I myself would not say? It is you who lack manners!"

Having received as close to a public apology as a Pope could proffer, Michelangelo knelt and kissed the Pope's ring.

"Come to my camp tomorrow," Julius said. "We will arrange our affairs."

He left the palace to visit his friend Aldovrandi. Aldovrandi could not stop chuckling at the happenings in the dining hall. "You're so much alike," he commented, "you and Julius. You both have a *terribilità*. No wonder he respects you."

"What do you suppose the Holy Father intends to do with me?" Michelangelo asked.

"Put you to work. You'll stay with us, of course?"

Michelangelo accepted with pleasure. "How is your nephew Marco?"

"Quite well. He has a new girl, one he found in Rimini."

"Then where is Clarissa?"

"She lives in the Via di Mezzo di San Martino."

"Would you excuse me?"

"Love and a cough," Aldovrandi said, "cannot be hid."

Half an hour later, Michelangelo stood with her in the doorway of the roof penthouse overlooking the Piazza di San Martino. She was silhouetted against the orange glow of the oil-lamps, her face framed in the fur cowl of a woollen robe. His mind went back to the first time he had seen her when she was nineteen, slender, golden-haired, delicately sensuous. Now she was thirty-one, at a lush peak of ripeness. Again he was aware of her magnificent body. She led him into a small sitting-room, then turned to him. He slipped his arms inside her fur-lined robe. Her body was warm. He held her to him, kissed her yielding mouth.

She murmured: "When I first said, 'It is natural for us to want each other,' you blushed like a boy."

"Artists know nothing of love. My friend Granacci describes it as a diversion."

"How would you describe it?"

"What I feel for you? As a torrent that hurtles a man's body down through rocky cañons, sweeps him along at flood tide."

"And then?"

"I can talk no more. . . ."

The robe slipped off her shoulders. She raised her arms, released a few pins and the long braids of hair fell to her waist. There was no voluptuousness in her movements, but rather the quality he remembered of sweetness, as though love were her natural medium.

Later, as they lay in each other's arms, she asked: "You have found love?"

"Not since you."

"There are available women in Rome."

"Seven thousand. My friend Balducci used to count them every Sunday. It is not my kind of love."

"Tomorrow I will go to church to confess my sin, but I do not believe this love to be a sin," she said.

"God invented love. It is beautiful."

"Could the devil be tempting us?"

"The devil is an invention of man."

"There is no evil?"

"Ugliness is evil."

HE REACHED Julius's military encampment on the bank of the River Reno, through heavy snows. Julius was reviewing his troops, wrapped in an enormous furred and wadded overcoat, on his head a bulky grey woollen hood. Abusing his officers in coarse language, storming up and down his lines, shouting orders, he looked like an Old Testament prophet. He led Michelangelo to his tent, hung with warm furs. "Buonarroti, I have been thinking that I would like you to sculpture a bronze statue of me in my robes and triple crown."

"Bronze!" It was an agonized cry. "It is not my trade!"

Julius's face flushed with anger. "You shall do this as a service to your Pope."

"Holy Father, I know nothing of casting, finishing. Let me return to marble."

The Pope's face was livid. "Buonarroti, stop issuing ultimatums. You shall create a stupendous bronze statue of me for the space above the main portal of San Petronio."

"Holy Father, if my bronze statue pleases you, will you permit me to resume carving marble?"

"The pontiff does not make bargains!" cried Julius. "Bring me your drawings in one week."

Humiliated, he made his way into town to Clarissa's penthouse. She was dressed in a deep pink silk, with low neckline and bucket sleeves, her hair caught up in a garland of jewelled threads. She kissed him. "There is hot water on the fire. Would you like a bath to relax you? You can take it in the kitchen, while I find some food for you. I will wash your back."

"I've never had anyone wash my back for me."

"Apparently there are a lot of things you have never had."

He dropped his clothes on the kitchen floor and stepped gingerly into the hot water she had poured into a long oval tub. Then he stretched his legs with a sigh of relief.

"Why don't you spend the week here?" said Clarissa. "No one will know where you are, you will be undisturbed."



"A whole week to think only of love! Is that possible? Not one thought of clay or bronze?"

"I am not clay or bronze." Her musical laugh dissipated the last of the day's humiliation. "Here, dry yourself before the fire."

He rubbed his skin hard, then Clarissa wrapped him in a second enormous towel, sat him at a table before a steaming dish of thin sliced veal and *piselli*. He ate ravenously. Content, he pushed his chair back from the table, turned towards the fire. Clarissa came to sit at his feet. "No other woman has made me want her," he said. "How can it be explained?"

"Love is not to be explained." She turned, got on her knees, and wrapped her arms about his neck. "It is to be enjoyed."

"And to be marvelled at." He burst into laughter. "The Pope didn't mean to do me a kindness, but he has . . . the first."

On the last afternoon of the week, filled with a delicious lassitude, he picked up drawing paper and a piece of charcoal. He drew Julius in

a formal pose, with the left leg extended, one arm reaching out, perhaps in benediction.

At the appointed hour he appeared before the Pope, who was delighted with his sketch. He said to Messer Carlino, his treasurer, "You are to give Buonarroti whatever he needs." Carlino, a sallow, thin-lipped man, gave him a hundred ducats. Michelangelo sent a messenger for Argiento and wrote to the Signoria, asking if the Duomo's bronze casters Lapo and Lotti could be sent to help cast the Pope's statue.

He rented a former carriage house in the Street of the Tuscans, with a high ceiling, stone walls and brick floor. There was a garden at the back, and a fire-place for cooking.

Argiento arrived, and, two days later, Lapo and Lotti. Michelangelo put little Lapo in charge of buying supplies: wax, clay, cloth, brick for the casting ovens.

The hundred ducats were soon exhausted and Michelangelo had to ask Carlino for more money. "What did you do with the first hundred ducats?" Carlino asked.

"None of your business."

"Bring me receipted bills for the first hundred, and written estimates of what you want to spend the second hundred for."

"You're like the gardener's dog, that neither eats cabbage himself nor lets anyone else."

There was the ghost of a smile on Carlino's lips. "It is my job to make people hate me. Then they return as seldom as possible."

"I'll be back."

Lapo quieted him. "I remember what I spent. I'll write the bills."

Michelangelo walked to San Domenico to see his own angel with the wings of an eagle, his St. Petronius and the young St. Proculus. Suddenly he straightened. The St. Proculus had been broken in two places, awkwardly repaired. He felt someone staring at him and whirled round. It was his old enemy, Vincenzo. "Welcome back to Bologna," Vincenzo said.

"It was you who broke my marble!"

"The day it fell I was in the country, making brick. It could happen again, too. There are wicked folk who say your statue of the Pope will be melted down the day his soldiers leave. But me, I am a devout man. I plan to kneel before it."

MICHELANGELO started work at white heat. Much as he detested bronze, his own integrity forced him to do the best he could.

Aldovrandi sent him models, spread the word that those men most closely resembling Pope Julius would be paid a special wage. Michelangelo sketched from light to dark, Argiento cooked and cleaned, Lotti built a small brick oven to test the local metals for fusing, Lapo continued to do the buying. His only joy was Clarissa. He managed to steal a couple of nights a week to spend with her. No matter what hour he arrived there was food by the side of the fire, ready to be heated.

Mail from Florence came irregularly. Michelangelo received little but requests for money. Lodovico had found another farm: if Michelangelo could send five hundred florins From Buonarroto and Giovansimone, both working at a wool shop, there was rarely a letter without the lines, *You promised us another shop. We are tired of working for someone else. We want to make lots of money.* . . . Muttering to himself, "So do I," Michelangelo wrapped himself in a blanket while his three assistants slept, and answered: *As soon as I come to Florence, I will set you up in business. I shall try to get money for the farm.*

He spent hours following Julius about, sketching him as he said Mass, walked in procession, shouted in anger, laughed at a courtier's joke, until he knew every bone and sinew of his body. Then he worked day and night, slowly adding clay to a thirteen-foot-high armature of wood to create the model from which the bronze would be cast. In the third week of January the model was ready for the Pope's inspection.

Julius arrived, accompanied by Messer Carlino. Michelangelo had draped a quilt over his one comfortable chair. Here the Pope sat in silence, studying his portrait.

He was pleased, but he seemed perplexed by the right hand, which was raised in a haughty, almost violent gesture.

"Buonarroti, does this hand intend to bless or curse?"

"The right hand lifted, Holy Father, bids the Bolognese be obedient even though you are in Rome."

"And the left hand. What shall it hold?"

"Perhaps the keys to the new St. Peter's?"

"Bravissimo!"

Glancing at Carlino, Michelangelo added, "I must buy seven to eight hundred pounds of wax to create the model."

The Pope authorized the expenditure and swept out. Michelangelo sent Lapo to shop for the wax. Lapo returned shortly.

"I cannot get it for less than nine florins and forty soldi a hundred. Better buy it at once, it is a bargain."

Michelangelo was disturbed by a strange note in Lapo's voice. He said quietly to Argiento, "Go to the same shop and ask the price."

Argiento returned, whispered, "They are asking eight and a half florins, and I can get off the brokerage charge."

Michelangelo went to Lapo. "Lapo, you've been taking a profit from me on everything you bought."

"Why not! You pay so little and there isn't enough to eat!"

"You eat what we eat," growled Argiento. "Food's expensive. If you had stolen less there would have been more for all of us."

"There's food in the inns, wine in the wine-shops," Lapo said. "And women in the Street of the Bordellos. I would not live the way you live."

"Then return to Florence," said Michelangelo bitterly.

Lapo packed his possessions and Lotti left with him.

HE LOST not only Lapo and Lotti but Clarissa as well.

The Pope announced that he would return to Rome for Lent. This gave Michelangelo only a few weeks in which to perfect the wax model and get the Pope's final approval. Without helpers, he had to work with no thought of food or sleep. In those rare hours when he could tear himself away he had no time to sit companionably with Clarissa, to tell her what he was doing. He went only when hunger for her drove him blindly through the streets to possess her, and then to leave at once. Clarissa was sad; she gave less of herself each time he came.

"Clarissa, I'm sorry for the way things are," he said.

She raised, then lowered her hands hopelessly. "A friend has sent a groom from Milan, with a carriage to take me there. . . ."

A few days later the Pope visited the work-yard for the last time, approved the model. He gave Michelangelo his benediction and an order on a banker to continue paying his costs.

Desperately needing a bronze caster, Michelangelo wrote again to Florence, asking for Master Bernardino, the best in Tuscany. But it was May before Bernardino arrived. He built a tremendous brick oven in the courtyard. There followed weeks of experimenting with the fires,

testing the way the metals fused. Michelangelo was filled with impatience to cast and go home. "We must not hurry," Bernardino warned him. "One untested step, and all our work will be for nothing."

Aldovrandi came frequently to watch his work. "This bronze of yours is going to make me a rich man," he commented, wiping his brow as the oven turned the work-yard into an inferno. "Bologna is betting that your statue is too large to cast. I'm taking all bets."

"It will cast," replied Michelangelo grimly. "I have watched Bernardino step by step. He could make bronze without fire."

But when they finally poured in June, something went wrong. The statue came out well as far as the waist; the rest of the material remained in the furnace. It did not fuse. To take it out the furnace would have to be dismantled. Bernardino was as wretched as Michelangelo. "This has never happened to me before."

"You are a good artisan. He who works, at times fails."

In a flash it was all over town that Michelangelo had failed to cast the pontiff's statue. Crowds started to pour into the courtyard. Aldovrandi arrived and cleared them out. Bernardino's face was green. "What a cruel city this is! They think they have gained a victory because of our failure."

He worked heroically, night and day, rebuilt the furnace, experimented with the metals. Finally, under the blinding heat of the mid-July sun, he poured again. Slowly, the heated metal began to run from the furnace into the mould. With that, Bernardino said: "There's nothing more for me to do now. I leave for Florence at dawn."

Michelangelo was left to discover the results himself. He had to wait for three weeks, until the mould cooled sufficiently for him to tear it down. The two halves of the statue were joined without a serious mark. "A few weeks of filing and polishing," Michelangelo thought, "and I, too, will be on my way."

He had misgauged the task. He and Argiento were seemingly condemned to an eternity of cleaning up the tremendous statue. Finally the bronze was rubbed down to a shiny dark tone. A crew came to move the statue to the front of San Petronio. Bells rang all over the city as the statue was hoisted into the niche over the portal. When the covering was removed from the statue, the crowd cheered, then fell to its knees and crossed itself. That evening there were fireworks in the square.

Michelangelo, standing in his worn workman's shirt at the far end of the piazza, went unnoticed. Looking up at Julius in his niche, illuminated by shooting rockets, he felt nothing, not even relief. He was dry, barren, used up. He had exactly four and a half florins left. At dawn he knocked at Aldovrandi's door to bid his friend good-bye, and borrowed a horse to go home.

WITHIN a few days after he returned to Florence, Michelangelo learned that Soderini had good reason to be satisfied with himself: through his brilliant ambassador, Niccolò Machiavelli, whom he had trained, Florence had concluded a series of treaties which should enable the city-state to live in peace.

"Reports from the Vatican tell us that Julius is delighted with your bronze," Soderini told him. "Now I welcome you back to your house and studio. I will charge you eight florins a month rental until you begin carving the Apostles; then the house will become yours."

"This is where I will live and carve all the rest of my life. May God hear my words."

"I do not usually interfere in family life," Soderini said, "but the time has come for you to secure your freedom from your father. I want him to go with you to a notary and sign a legal emancipation. What you give him then will be a gift, not an obligation."

Michelangelo knew his father's failings yet he loved him. He shook his head. "It would do no good. I would have to turn over the money to him anyway."

"I insist. We will call in the notary."

Lodovico was heartbroken at being obliged to appear before the notary, for under Tuscan law an unmarried son became free only at the death of his father. There were tears in his eyes as they walked home. "Michelangelo, you won't abandon us now?" He had aged ten years in the ten-minute legal ceremony; his head was bowed.

"I will always do everything in my power for the family, Father. What else have I? My work and my family."

He renewed his friendships at the Company of the Cauldron. He learned that Contessina's lot was improved; with the growing importance of Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici in Rome, the Signoria had permitted the Ridolfi family to move back to their main villa. Giovanni

supplied them with funds. However, since Ridolfi was still an avowed enemy of the Republic, the Signoria would not let him move to Rome.

Contessina was permitted now to enter Florence. One day she caught Michelangelo gazing at his David. "You still find pleasure in it?"

He whirled at the sound of her voice, found himself gazing into the brown eyes that had always been able to stab through his thoughts. She had high colour in her cheeks from the walk in the brisk air. "Contessina! How well you look. It is good to see you."

"How was Bologna?"

"Dante's *Inferno*."

"All of it?" Though her question was innocently asked, he flushed.

"What was her name?"

"Clarissa. But she left me."

"Then you have known love, some portion of it?"

"In full measure."

"Permit me to envy you," she whispered, and was gone.

He had just started work on his St. Matthew when Soderini summoned him. "We have received a message from Pope Julius," he said. "He wants you in Rome. He has good news for you."

ONCE AGAIN in the large throne-room, he bowed to Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici, nodded to Cardinal Riario. Pope Julius cried triumphantly, "You see, Buonarroti, you had no confidence in yourself. When I asked for a bronze figure, you cried out, 'It is not my trade!'" The Pope's mimicking of Michelangelo's slightly hoarse voice brought laughter from the court. "Now you see how you have made it your trade, by creating a fine bronze."

"You are generous, Holy Father," murmured Michelangelo.

"I intend to continue being generous. I am going to favour you above all the painting masters of Italy. I am commissioning you to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel."

There was a light patter of applause. Michelangelo was stunned. The Sistine Chapel was known as the ugliest, most clumsy piece of architecture in Italy. He cried passionately: "I am a sculptor, not a painter!"

Julius said icily: "I had less trouble conquering Perugia and Bologna than I have in subduing you!"

"Holy Father, marble is my profession. Let me carve the Moses,

Victors, Captives for your tomb. Many would come to see the statues, offering thanks to Your Holiness for making them possible."

"In short," snapped Julius, "I need your sculptures to assure my place in history?"

"They could help, Holy Father."

There was a gasp from those round the throne. The Pope loosened the collar of his cape, took a deep breath and started again. "Buonarroti, my informants in Florence describe your cartoon for The Bathers as 'the school of the world.' "

"Holiness," said Michelangelo, cursing himself for his envy of Leonardo that had led him into this trap. "It was a diversion."

"*Bene.* Make such a diversion for the Sistine." A wisp of a smile drifted across the pontiff's face, was reflected in an amber sparkle in Michelangelo's eyes. Then the Pope said, in the tone of an exasperated but fond father: "Buonarroti, for painting the Sistine ceiling and decorating the vault we will pay you three thousand ducats. We shall also pay the wages of five assistants. When the chapel is completed, you have my promise that you shall return to your marble. My son, you are dismissed."

What could he say? Where could he flee? The Pope's power reached everywhere. There was nothing to do but submit.

He went to the chapel. Sunlight was streaming in from three tall windows, lighting the glorious frescoes of Botticelli and Cosimo Rosselli, shooting strong beams of light across the variegated marble floor. The side walls were one hundred and thirty-three feet long; the barrel vault rose sixty-eight feet above him. Taking a deep breath, he craned his neck and looked up at the ceiling, painted a light blue and studded with golden stars, the enormous area he was to fill with decorations. The motive for the commission now became crushingly clear to him. It was not to put magnificent paintings on the ceiling, but rather to mask the ugly structural supports which made a harsh transition from the top third of the wall into the vault. As an artist he had become merely an obliterator of other men's clumsiness.

He wrote to Argiento, to Granacci, to the Topolinos, asking them to send him assistants. A groom arrived from the Pope, informing him that the house where his marble for the tomb had lain these two years was still available to him. He signed his contract for the Sistine Chapel and

was given five hundred ducats. He paid his long-overdue debts, and then summoned up the courage to return to the Sistine. He found Bramante there, directing the hanging of a scaffolding from the ceiling by means of poles driven through the vault. "There's a scaffolding that will hold you securely for the rest of your life," Bramante said.

"Just what do you intend to do with the holes in the ceiling after the poles come out?"

"Fill them."

"How do we get up there to fill them after the scaffolding is down? Ride on an eagle's back?"

"I hadn't thought of that."

Michelangelo went to the Pope and got permission to build his own scaffold. With the carpenters, he built a scaffold resting on a projecting cornice and solidly wedged against the thick, strong walls. When it was finished, Michelangelo and the carpenters tested it: the more the weight on the trestle, the more strongly it pressed against the walls. He was jubilant. It was a tiny victory, but it provided the impetus to begin the detested chore.

Argiento could not leave his brother's farm until the crops had been harvested. Granacci, in Florence, was trying to assemble a crew of assistants for Michelangelo from the old Ghirlandaio studio. Summer clamped down, and miasmic vapours rose from the marshes. Michelangelo climbed the ladder to his scaffold at dawn, drawing scale models and cutting out paper silhouettes of spaces he would have to fill. By midmorning the vault was like a furnace, and he was gasping for breath. He slept as though drugged through the heat of the afternoon, then worked at night in the back garden, evolving designs for the nearly six thousand square feet of sky and stars that had to be frescoed.

In September Granacci arrived with a full workshop crew. The former apprentices had aged: Jacopo was still slim and wiry, but with deeply etched laugh wrinkles; Tedesco, who sported a bushy beard, had become thick-set. Bugiardini, still moon-faced, showed a patch of baldness like a tonsure. Giuliano's nephew, Sebastiano da Sangallo, and Donnino were newcomers; there was also Michi, a stone-cutter from Settignano.

The studio set to work in earnest. To each of his six assistants Michelangelo assigned a division of the vault for decoration: rosettes, circles

and rectangles, trees and flowers. He felt certain he could cover the whole ceiling in seven months.

The group worked well together, Michi mixing the plaster on the scaffold after hauling the sacks up the ladder, Jacopo copying the cartoon colours into the designs that Bugiardini outlined. In October Argiento arrived, and was delighted to keep house for six companions.

After a seventh of the vault had been completed, Michelangelo returned alone to study the result. The Pope's objective would be accomplished; no one would be disturbed any more by a broken-up vault with monotonous circles of stars. The Apostles on their thrones, the thousands of square feet of brightly coloured designs would conceal and divert.

But what about the quality of the work? He had never compromised with quality; his integrity as an artist was the rock on which his life was built. And he could not deny that this work was mediocre. His assistants were only ten days away from blowing up the next cartoons to full size. He would have to decide quickly what to do.

Christmas came, and Cardinal Giovanni invited Michelangelo to dinner. A groom with Florentine lilies embroidered on his livery admitted him to the palace. He passed through the spacious hall and music-room, then stopped abruptly at the entrance to a small drawing-room. There, sitting before a log fire, her hands extended to the flames, sat Contessina. She looked up. "Michelangelo. *Come va?*"

"*Non c'è male.* I don't have to ask how you are. You look beautiful."

Colour rose in her cheeks. "You've never said that before."

"But I've always thought it. You are a deep part of me. From the days when my life began, in the sculpture garden." He became aware of others in the room, changed his tone. "Your family is with you?"

"My children, but not my husband. He is still too openly committed to the downfall of the Republic." She smiled at him, wistfully. "Now I want to speak of you," she said. "Is your work going well?"

"Not yet."

"It will."

"Are you sure?"

"I'll put my hand in fire." She held her hand out as though towards flames. He longed to take it. Then she threw back her head in laughter at the drastic Tuscan phrase she had used. Their laughter joined together. This too was a kind of possessing; rare, beautiful and sacred.

THE ROMAN countryside was not Tuscany; it did not fill him with an all-absolving grace. But it had power and history: the flat, fertile plains rolling for miles, traversed by the remains of Roman aqueducts; Hadrian's villa, where Michelangelo watched excavators unearth ancient marbles; Tivoli, with its majestic waterfalls; Tusculum, high in the volcanic hills, with the ruins of Cicero's villa. Seeking a solution for the problem that nagged at him, he walked deeper and deeper into the past, stopping each night at a tiny inn or knocking on the door of a peasant's hut to buy his supper and space on a bed to rest. Gradually the decision he must make became clear: his helpers would have to go. He did not have the nature of a Ghirlandaio, able to do the main figures and allow his studio to do the rest. He had to work alone.

On New Year's morning, 1509, he climbed a sheep trail to the summit of a mountain. The air was sharp, clear and cold. As he stood on the peak the sun came up behind him. In the distance stood Rome, sparklingly clear. Beyond and to the south lay the Tyrrhenian Sea, pastel green under a brittle blue winter sky. The whole landscape was flooded with luminosity; forests, the descending range of hills, the fertile plains, the somnolent farms, the stone-pile villages, the roads leading to Rome. He thought, "What a magnificent artist was God when He created the universe." He remembered the words. *God, at the beginning of time, created heaven and earth. Earth was still an empty waste, and darkness hung over the deep. . . . Then God said, Let there be light. . . . God said too, Let a solid vault arise amid the waters . . . a vault by which God would separate the waters which were beneath it from the waters above it. . . . This vault God called the Sky. . . . And God said, Let us make man, wearing our own image and likeness. . . . So God made man in His own image. . . .*

Suddenly he knew that nothing would suffice for his vault but Genesis itself: God's creating the sun and moon, the water and the earth, man and woman. There was a theme to conquer that vault, to overwhelm it with the glory of God's architecture!

He told the Pope about his new plan.

"You are a strange one, Buonarroti," the Pope said. "You screamed in rage that fresco was not your profession. Yet now you come back with a plan that will entail five or six times as much labour as the original plan. Well, paint your ceiling as you will. We cannot pay you five

or six times the original three thousand ducats, but we will double it."

He told Granacci that the assistants would have to go home. "I will keep Michi to grind the colours," he said, "and I will have Rosselli to lay the plaster. The rest I must do by myself."

"Working alone on top of that scaffolding to re-create the story of Genesis will take you forty years!" Granacci said.

"No, closer to four."

Granacci put his arms about his friend. "You have David's courage."

He was determined to get a teeming humanity up on the Sistine ceiling, as well as the God who created it; mankind portrayed in its breathless beauty, its weaknesses, its indestructible strengths: God in His ability to make all things possible. The centre space, running the full length of the vault, he would use for his major works: Dividing the Waters from the Earth; God Creating the Sun, the Moon; God Creating Adam and Eve; Expelling Adam and Eve from the Garden; the legend of Noah and the Deluge. Ideas now came tumbling over each other tumultuously. On the ends and sides he would show Prophets and Sibyls, each sitting on a marble throne. Connecting the thrones would be a cornice painted like marble.

While Piero Rosselli used a claw hammer to tear out the plaster already frescoed, Argiento came to Michelangelo with tears in his eyes. His brother had died, and he would have to work the family farm. "My brother left little children," he said. "I'll be a farmer, marry my brother's wife, bring up the children."

He paid Argiento's back wages with almost the last of his funds. He had received no money from the Pope for months. He could not ask for more funds until he had an important section of the ceiling finished. He ate his supper in his quiet house, thinking how noisy and gay it had been, with Jacopo telling stories, Bugiardini singing love songs. It would be lonely too, on the scaffolding in the barren chapel.

HE BEGAN with the Deluge. By March he had the cartoon ready to be transferred to the ceiling. Michi carried the sacks of lime, sand and volcanic tufa dust up the steep ladders to the top of the scaffolding. Here he made his mix. Then he and Michelangelo climbed a series of three receding platforms to lay an area of *intonaco*. Michi held the cartoon while Michelangelo outlined the figures; then Michi descended to grind

colours below. Michelangelo was now on his top platform, sixty feet above the floor. As always on a scaffolding, he suffered vertigo. He turned from his view of the marble floor and picked up a brush, remembering that so many years ago Mainardi had told him always to keep his colours liquid this early in the morning. . . .

He painted with his head and shoulders pulled back, his eyes staring straight up. Paint dripped on to his face, the wet plaster dripped into his eyes. His arms and back tired quickly from the strain of the unnatural position. During the first week he allowed Michi to lay only modest areas of *intonaco,* proceeding cautiously, experimenting with figures and colours.

He felt more alone than ever when he learned that Sangallo must travel the long road of defeat back to Florence. He had no further commissions from the Pope; his apprentices had joined Bramante, who had taken his place as he had schemed to. When Sangallo and his family left, their departure went unnoticed by the Vatican.

The Deluge took thirty-two days of painting. During the last weeks Michelangelo was completely out of funds. How was it that only he did not prosper from his papal connections? Young Raphael Sanzio, recently brought to Rome by Bramante, had been commissioned by the Pope to fresco his new suite of rooms. Paid a generous retainer, he had rented a luxurious villa, installed a beautiful mistress and a staff of servants. The Pope included him in his hunting parties and dinners. He was seen everywhere, petted, loved, plied with commissions.

Michelangelo buried his hunger and loneliness in work, sketching the next fresco, the Sacrifice of Noah. As the figures came alive under his swiftly moving fingers, his sense of isolation receded. He felt secure only in this world of his own creating. And he sighed, for he knew himself to be a victim of his own character. . . .

Pope Julius came to see the first fresco. He climbed the ladder, joined Michelangelo on the scaffolding, studied the fifty-five men, women and children in the scene. He said: "The rest of the ceiling will be as good?"

"It should be better, Holy Father, for I am still learning about perspective at this height."

"I am pleased with you, my son. I shall order the treasurer to pay you five hundred ducats."

At last he was able to send money home, to buy food and supplies.

Now, while painting the Prophet Zacharias, he had an odd feeling that someone was coming in at night and mounting his ladder to the frescoes. As far as he knew, no one but he and the papal chamberlain, Accursio, had a key to the Sistine. He had insisted upon this, so that no one could spy on his work.

Michi hid in a doorway, brought back word that it was Bramante and Raphael. Bramante had a key; they came in after midnight. Michelangelo was furious: before he could get his vault completed, his new techniques would be on the walls of the rooms Raphael was painting. He spoke to the Pope and the key was taken away from Bramante.

Shortly after this, Cardinal Giovanni summoned him to the Medici palace. "Michelangelo," he said, "every day Bramante makes you new enemies. I want you to become an intimate of this house, come to dinner here, be at my side during my hunting parties, ride in my processions. I want Rome to know you are under my protection. This will silence your detractors."

But how could he paint for a few hours, walk to Giovanni's house, talk charmingly to thirty guests, eat a delicious dinner over several hours . . .? When he explained why he was unable to accept, Cardinal Giovanni said: "Raphael does work of high quality, yet he dines out every day. Why can't you?"

"Your Grace, for Raphael, the creating of a work of art is a bright spring day in the country; for me, it is an alpine wind howling down the valley from the mountain-tops. When I have finished a day of work I am empty. I have nothing to give."

"Not even when it is to your best interest?"

"My best interest can only be my best work."

FOR THIRTY days he painted from light to darkness, completing the Sacrifice of Noah, the four titanic male nudes surrounding it, the Erythraean Sibyl on her throne, and the Prophet Isaiah opposite. For thirty days he slept in his clothes; and when, at the completion of this section, utterly spent, he had Michi pull his boots off, bits of skin came away with them.

He grew dizzy from painting standing with his neck arched so that he could peer straight upward; he had learned to blink his eyes with each

brush stroke, but they still blurred from the dripping paint. He instructed Rosselli to make him a still higher platform on top of the scaffolding. He painted sitting down, his thighs drawn up tight against his belly for balance, his eyes a few inches from the ceiling, until the unpadded bones of his buttocks became so bruised and sore he could no longer endure the agony. Then he lay flat on his back, his knees in the air, doubled over as tightly as possible against his chest to steady his painting arm. His beard became a catch-all for the constant drip of paint. No matter which way he leaned, crouched, lay or knelt, he was always under strain.

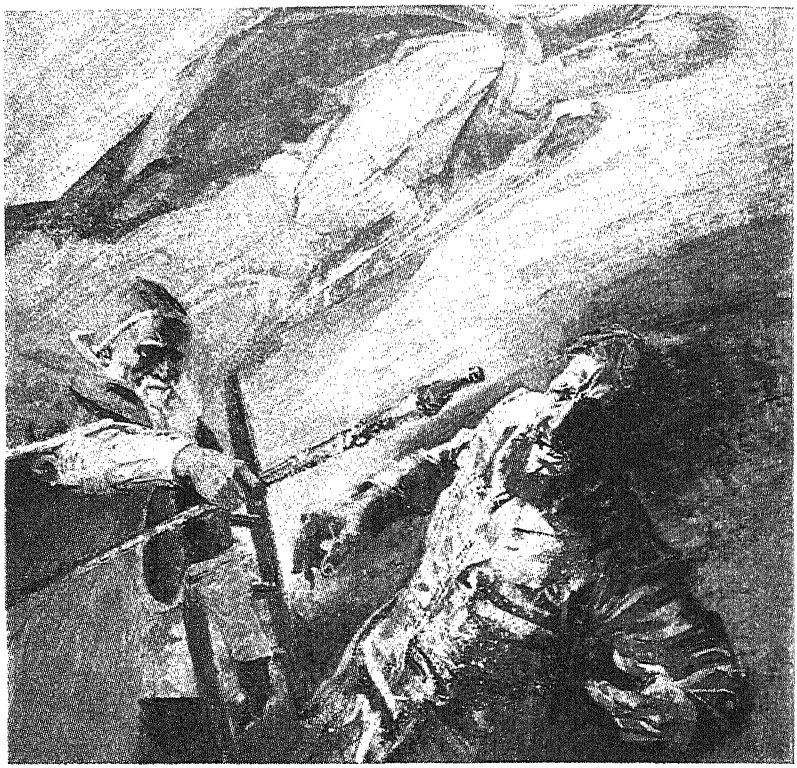
Then he thought he was going blind. A letter arrived from Buonarroto. He could not decipher a word. He threw himself on his bed. What was he doing to himself? Sleepless, racked with pain, homesick, lonely, he rose in the inky blackness, lit a candle, and on the back of an old sketch tried to lighten his mood by pouring out his woes:

My beard turns up to heaven; my nape falls in,
fixed on my spine: my breastbone visibly
grows like a harp: a rich embroidery
bedews my face from brush drops thick and thin.
. . . foul I fare and painting is my shame.

When he walked from his house to the chapel and back he did so almost blinded by paint, his head lowered, seeing no one. Passers-by often thought him crazy.

He forced himself to see his only reality: the life and the people on his ceiling. His intimates were Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. He portrayed them not as timid, delicate creatures, but powerful, handsome, accepting temptation in calm strength rather than weak stupidity. This was the mother and father of man, created by God, and he, Michelangelo Buonarroti, brought them to life in noble mien and proportion.

In June 1510, a year and a few weeks after he had shown Julius the first frescoes, half of the vault was completed. He had not told anyone, but the Pope knew at once. He sent word to Michelangelo that he would be in the Sistine at mid-afternoon. Michelangelo helped him up the last rungs of the ladder, and explained the various scenes to him. Julius at once demanded that the scaffold be taken down so that the world could



see how great a thing was being executed. "It is not yet time to take the scaffold down, Holy Father. There is much still to be done."

"When will it be ready?" insisted the Pope.

Michelangelo was irritated. "When it is ready!"

Julius went red in the face, raised his staff in a fury and brought it down across Michelangelo's shoulder.

There was a silence while the two antagonists glared at each other. Michelangelo went cold all over, he bowed, said formally: "It shall be as Your Holiness desires. The scaffolding will be down by tomorrow, the chapel ready to be shown." He stepped back, leaving space for the Pope to descend the ladder.

"It is not for you, Buonarroti, to dismiss your pontiff!" cried Julius. "You are dismissed."

Michelangelo backed down the ladder, left the chapel. So this was the end! A bitter end, to be beaten like a peasant. He stumbled blindly along unfamiliar streets. He had re-created the world. He had tried to be God! Well, Pope Julius II had put him in his place. *"Foul I fare and painting is my shame."* He made his way home. Michi was already there, owl-eyed.

"Pack your things, Michi," he said. "Get a head start on me. If the Pope orders my arrest, I don't want them taking you too."

"He had no right to hit you."

"He can put me to death if he wants to. Only he'll have to catch me first."

He filled one canvas bag with his drawings, another with his personal things. Just as he finished there was a knock on the door. He opened it, and there was Chamberlain Accursio.

"Have you come to arrest me?"

"My good friend," said Accursio gently, "do you think the pontiff would bother to strike anyone he was not deeply fond of? The Pope loves you, as a gifted, albeit unruly son." He took a purse from his belt. "The pontiff asked me to bring you these five hundred ducats and to convey his apologies. He did not want this to happen."

"Who knows that the Pope sent you to beg my pardon?"

"Is that important?"

"Since Rome will know the pontiff struck me, I can only go on living here if people also know that he apologized."

Accursio rolled his shoulders. "Who has ever been able to conceal anything in this city?"

Julius chose the week of the Feast of the Assumption to unveil the first half of the vault, but he sent no word to Michelangelo, who spent the intervening weeks at home, drawing. It was an uneasy truce. The first he knew of the gathering in the Sistine was when Raphael came to his work-room. The younger man's face had aged, the flesh a little flaccid. Only twenty-seven, he looked ten years older. Even as Michelangelo's hard, gruelling labour had taken its toll of him, so Raphael's fine looks were dissolving in food, drink, women.

"Messer Buonarroti, your chapel staggers me," said Raphael, "I came to apologize for my bad manners in the past."

Michelangelo remembered his own apology to Leonardo. "Artists

must forgive each other their sins," he said.

No one else came to congratulate him. He was as solitary as though he were dead. The painting on the Sistine ceiling was outside the pale of Rome's life, a private duel between Michelangelo, God and Julius II.



And suddenly, Pope Julius was deep in war. He again left Rome at the head of his army to drive the French out of northern Italy and to solidify the Papal State. Michelangelo was left stranded; the Pope's chamberlain had not brought him permission to put back the scaffolding and commence work on the altar half of the vault. Julius had waited for him to appear at the Vatican; he had waited for Julius to summon him. The Pope might be gone for months. What did he do in the meanwhile?

IT WAS not until after New Year, 1511, that he was able to start painting again. The Pope sent money for the work he had completed, and permission to do the second half of the chapel. Now Michelangelo could come to grips with the themes of God Creating Adam, Creating the Sun and Moon, Dividing the Waters from the Earth, Separating Light and Darkness. These four panels were the heart of the ceiling.

He had always loved God: now he must make Him manifest. He had only to set down in drawings the image he had carried with him since childhood, of God as the most beautiful, powerful, intelligent and loving force in the universe; in Adam, true creature of his Father, God would be reflected.



God Creating the Sun and Moon: Sistine Chapel

While Michelangelo remained high in the heavens painting, Julius plunged into the special inferno reserved for warriors who suffer a rout. He failed in his siege of Ferrara, failed in his efforts to break the alliance between the Holy Roman Empire and France; when the French and Ferrarese recaptured Bologna, Julius lost his armies, artillery, baggage. Crushed, almost bankrupt, crippled with gout, he made his way back to Rome.

Julius's defeat was a defeat for Michelangelo also, for the Bolognese tore his bronze statue of Julius from its niche.

The Duke of Ferrara melted it down and recast it into a cannon, which he named *Julius*. . . . Fifteen months of his time, energy, talents were gone.

During the warm, light days of May and June he spent seventeen hours a day on the scaffold, taking food and a chamber pot up with him,

painting like a man possessed, striving desperately to complete his Genesis before the collapse of its protector.

Julius had returned to Rome the most hated man in Italy, his resources so exhausted that he had to borrow money on the jewels in the papal tiara. Even the Roman nobles were in league against him. Understanding defeat, Michelangelo now felt that he must call on his Pope.

Julius's face was ravaged by frustration and illness, but his voice was friendly as he said: "Your ceiling, it moves along?"

"Holiness, I think you will be gratified."

"If I am, you will be the first to bring me gratification for a long time. I will come to the Sistine with you."

He could hardly climb the ladder: Michelangelo had to haul him up the last few rungs. At the top he stood panting; and then, as he saw God above him, about to impart the gift of life to Adam, a smile came to his lips.

"Do you truly believe that God is so benign?"

"Yes, Holy Father."

"I most ardently hope so, since I am going to be standing before Him before long. If He is as you have painted Him, then I shall be forgiven my sins." He turned towards Michelangelo, his expression radiant. "I am pleased with you, my son."

Basking in the rays of the hot sun and the Pope's hearty acceptance of his labours, Michelangelo wanted to hold its warmth for a little while longer; he crossed the piazza to where the piers and walls of the new St. Peter's were beginning to rise. He was surprised to find that Bramante was not building of solid stone and concrete, but was erecting hollow concrete forms and filling them with rubble. The bulky mass would give the appearance of being solid, but was it not a dangerous way to support so heavy a structure? And as he watched the men preparing the concrete, he saw that they were not following the sound engineering precept of one portion of cement to three or four of sand, but were using ten and twelve portions of sand to one of cement. This mix could be fatal under the best of circumstances; but to hold the vast St. Peter's with uncompacted debris between its piers, it could be catastrophic.

He made straight for Bramante's palace, was admitted by a liveried footman. Bramante was working in his library.

"Bramante, I will pay you the compliment of believing that you do

not know what is going on," he began without preamble. "However, when the walls of St. Peter's crumble, it will make little difference whether you were stupid or merely negligent. Your walls will crack."

"Who are you, a ceiling decorator, to tell the greatest architect in Europe how to build piers?"

"The same one who showed you how to build a scaffold. Someone is cheating you by putting in the mix considerably less cement than the minimum requirements. Watch your foreman."

Bramante went purple with rage. He rose, clenched both fists. "Buonarroti, if you run to the Pope with this scandalmongering I swear I'll strangle you with my bare hands."

Michelangelo remained calm. "I shall watch your cement mix for two days. At the end of that time, if you are not using safe proportions, I shall report it to the Pope and to everyone else who will listen to me."

"No one will listen to you. You command no respect in Rome. Now get out of my house."

Bramante did nothing to change his materials. Michelangelo went to Julius, who listened for a time, then interrupted. "My son, Bramante has already warned me of your attack on him. Are you as good an architect as he is?"

"No, Holy Father."

"Then paint your ceiling and let Bramante build his church."

Michelangelo knelt abruptly, kissed the Pope's ring, left. He was sorely puzzled. Bramante was too good an architect to put his most important creation in danger. There must be an explanation. Leo Baglioni knew everything: he knocked on his door.

"It's not hard to explain," replied Leo. "Bramante is living beyond his means, spending hundreds of thousands of ducats. He has to have more money; now the piers of St. Peter's are paying his debts."

Aghast, Michelangelo cried, "Have you told the Pope this?"

"Assuredly not. You told the Pope. What did it get you?"

Julius paid Michelangelo another five hundred ducats, and kept insisting that he complete his ceiling quickly, quickly! One day he climbed the ladder unannounced. "When will it be finished?"

"When I have satisfied myself."

"You have already taken four years."

"It will be done, Holy Father, when it will be done."

"Do you want to be thrown down from this scaffolding?"

Michelangelo gazed at the marble floor below.

"On All Saints' Day I shall celebrate Mass here," declared the Pope.

Michelangelo had wanted to touch up some of the draperies and skies in gold and ultramarines, but there would be no time now. He asked Michi to take down the scaffold.

On All Saints' Day official Rome dressed itself in its finest robes for the Pope's dedication of the Sistine Chapel. Michelangelo rose early, but he did not go to the Sistine. Instead he walked out under the portico of his house, pulled back the tarpaulin, stood ruminatively before the marble columns he had waited these seven long years to carve. He took up his hammer and chisel. Fatigue, bitterness and pain fell away. Sunlight caught the first shafts of marble dust that floated upward.

BOOK EIGHT
The Medici



POPE JULIUS II survived the completion of the Sistine vault by only a few months. Giovanni de' Medici, first Florentine to be elected to the papacy, was the new Pope.

Michelangelo waited in the Piazza San Pietro among the Florentine nobles who were determined to make this the most lavish procession ever to be seen in Rome. Ahead of him were two hundred spearmen, the captains of the thirteen regions of Rome with their banners flying, the five standard-bearers of the Church carrying flags with the papal arms. Twelve milk-white horses from the papal stables were flanked by a hundred young nobles in fringed red silk and ermine. Behind him were a hundred Roman barons accompanied by their armed escorts, the Swiss guards in uniforms of white, yellow and green. The new Pope, called Leo X, mounted on a white Arabian stallion, was shaded from the warm April sun by a canopy of embroidered silk: he was nevertheless perspiring from the weight of the triple tiara and heavily jewelled cope.

The trumpeters sounded for the beginning of the march across the

city from St. Peter's, where Leo had been crowned. Riding beside his cousin, Paolo Rucellai, Michelangelo watched Pope Leo raising his pearl-encrusted gloved hand in benediction, his chamberlains beside him throwing gold coins to the crowds.

It was late when Michelangelo returned to his new home, on the Macello dei Corvi near Trajan's column. Just before his death Pope Julius had paid for the Sistine ceiling, and when this house with its cluster of wooden sheds, stable, tower and garden had come on the market at a reasonable price, he had bought it.

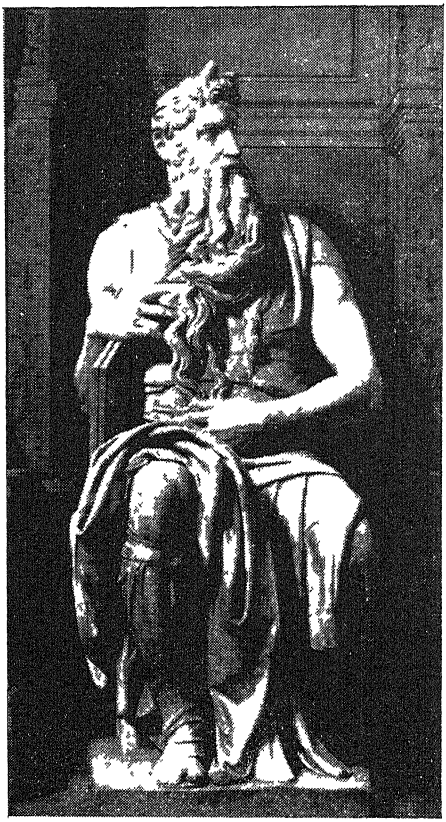
Half the house had been turned into a large workshop, where he had six young assistants. He lived better than before, felt easy about his future. Had not Pope Leo X told his courtiers: "Buonarroti and I were educated together under my father's roof"?

He was carving three heroic columns for Julius's tomb. One was the Moses who had just received from God the carved tablets of the Ten Commandments. The fierceness of soul which would burn outward through the cavernous depths of his eyes was his passionate resolve that his people must not destroy themselves, that they must obey the Commandments and endure.

Balducci, the banker, whom Michelangelo had first met in the streets of Rome eighteen years before, was advising him on the revision of the tomb contract, and Pope Leo was using his good offices to persuade Julius's heirs, the Roveres, to allow Michelangelo more time and more money. Under the new contract, he would have seven years to complete the work. He set to work vigorously on an eight-foot-tall Moses, the Lord's servant on earth, the voice of his conscience.

Meantime the Sistine ceiling had produced an effect equal to the unveiling of his David. Artists had flocked to Rome from all over Europe to help Leo celebrate his elevation to the papacy, and Michelangelo had rewon the title first earned by his Bathers fresco: "Master of the World." Bramante was no longer art emperor of Rome. Cracks of such dimension had shown in his piers of St. Peter's that all work had been stopped and studies undertaken to see if the foundations could be saved. Not long after, he died, and Raphael became the architect of St. Peter's.

Michelangelo had heard Leo remark immediately after his coronation: "Since God has seen fit to give us the papacy, let us enjoy it." Money was now pouring out of the Vatican at an unprecedented rate;



Alinari photo

Moses Pope Julius's Tomb
San Pietro in Vincoli, Rome

Leo needed more millions of ducats for pleasures and the arts than Julius had needed for war. The world of Italy was now the world of the Medici. Leo had legitimized his cousin Giulio and made him a cardinal; Leo's brother Giuliano was governing Florence.

In September Michelangelo was invited to the ceremony in which Giuliano was made a Baron of Rome. He sat with the Medici family: Contessina and Ridolfi—in Rome at last—with their sons, and Contessina's elder sisters with their families. Leo had had an open-air theatre built over the ancient Capitoline. There were speeches, masques, satires, a bawdy comedy; then a six-hour banquet with a profusion of dishes not seen in Rome since the days of Nero.

Contessina was determined to become Leo's official hostess. She had changed since his election to the papacy. Now, brooking no interference from her sisters, she fought for papal appointments, benefices for the Ridolfi family. More and more the laity, wanting favours and appointments, were coming to Contessina. This wielding of power was understandable, Michelangelo thought, after the years of poverty and exile; but the change in Contessina left him uncomfortable.

During the mild winter he secured a reprieve from her receptions by bringing her to the workshop to see his three figures of Moses and two

Captives, now emerging from the marble. His only associates during the long productive weeks were his assistants.

Only once did he go into society: when Giuliano urged him to attend a reception for Leonardo da Vinci, whom he had installed in the Belvedere, one of the Vatican palaces. When he entered the Belvedere, Giuliano took him through a series of work-rooms renovated for Leonardo's purposes. "Look at these concave mirrors," Giuliano exclaimed, "this metal screw-cutting machine. When I took him out on the Pontine marshes he located several extinct volcanoes, and sketched plans for draining the fever-laden area. He's completing his mathematical studies for the squaring of curved surfaces. His work on optics, his formulations of the laws of botany—amazing! Leonardo feels he will be able to tell the age of trees by counting the rings on the trunk. Imagine!"

"I would rather imagine him painting beautiful frescoes."

Leonardo met them dressed in an elaborate red costume with lacy sleeves. He looked tired and old, his magnificent beard and shoulder-length hair now white. The two men, who understood each other not at all, expressed pleasure at the reunion.

Other guests began to arrive. Soon there was a hubbub in the rooms. Michelangelo stood alone at a side window, neglected, not knowing whether he was perplexed or hurt. Leonardo was astonishing the guests with his new contrivances: animals filled with air which sailed over everyone's head; a live lizard to which he had attached wings filled with quicksilver, and whose head he had decorated with artificial eyes, horns and a beard. "The mechanical lion I made in Milan could walk several steps," he announced to the guests. "And when you pressed a button his breast fell open, exposing a bunch of lilies."

To himself Michelangelo muttered, "*Questo è il colmo!* This is the limit!" and rushed home.

CONTESSINA's health was failing. In the spring Michelangelo received an urgent note from her. He hurried to the palace and was taken upstairs to her bedroom. Though the weather was warm, she was covered by several quilts, her pale face lying exhausted on the pillows.

She beckoned him to her bed, patted a place for him to sit. He took her hand, white and fragile, in his own. There were tears in her warm brown eyes. "Michelangelo, I remember the first time we met. In the

sculpture garden. I asked, 'Doesn't such furious work exhaust you?' "

"And I answered, 'Cutting stone does not take strength out of you, it puts it back in.' "

"Everyone thought I was soon to die, as my mother and sister had.... You put strength in me, *caro*."

"You said, 'When I am near you, I feel strong.' "

"And you answered, 'When I am near you, I feel confused.' " She smiled. "Giovanni said you frightened him. You never frightened me. I saw how tender you were, under the surface." They stared at each other. Contessina whispered: "We have never spoken of our feelings."

He touched her cheek gently. "I loved you, Contessina."

"I loved you, Michelangelo. I have always felt your presence in the world." Her eyes lighted briefly. "My sons will be your friends."

She was seized with a coughing spell that shook the big bed. She turned her head away, raising a handkerchief to her lips. He waited, trying to control his tears. She did not turn back to him. He whispered, *"Addio, mia cara,"* and left the room.

CONTESSINA's death shook him deeply. He turned to his Moses, intense, expressive, and to his two Captives, one resisting death, one yielding, pouring into them his own grief and loss.

Pope Leo had been determined to reign without war, but that did not mean he could avoid his neighbours' incessant attempts to conquer the rich country. He went north to make a treaty with the French; while in Florence, he named the Buonarroti family Counts Palatine, and granted them the right to display the Medici crest of six balls. On his return to Rome he summoned Michelangelo to the Vatican. He was sitting at a table in his library with Giulio when Michelangelo was admitted. "Holy Father," he said, "you were most generous to my family, I am grateful."

"Good," said Leo, "because we do not want you, a Medici sculptor, to spend your time creating statues for a Rovere. You must leave your work for the Rovere heirs of Julius to undertake the greatest art commission of our age—a façade for our family church, San Lorenzo."

"But, Holy Father, I must finish the tomb for Pope Julius or the Roveres will prosecute me!"

"A Medici artist should serve the Medici," Leo repeated. His face

was flushed with anger. "You will enter our service at once. We will protect you against the Roveres, secure a new contract to give you more time. When you have completed the façade for San Lorenzo you can return to Julius's mausoleum."

"Holy Father, I have lived with this tomb for ten years. We are ready to construct the front wall, cast the bronzes, mount my Moses and Captives." He was shouting now. "You must not stop me. If I have to dismiss my trained workmen, leave the marble lying about. . . . Holiness, on the love I bore your noble father, I implore you not to do this to me." He knelt, bowed his head. "Give me time to finish this work. I will create a great façade for San Lorenzo, but I must not be tormented."

"Or is it," asked Giulio, "that you do not wish to create the San Lorenzo façade for the Medici?"

"I do, Your Grace. But it is a huge undertaking. . . ."

"You are right!" cried Leo. "You must leave for Carrara at once to choose the blocks. I will send you a thousand florins."

Michelangelo departed with tears streaming down his face.

CARRARA was a one-crop town: marble. Each day the Carrarino lifted his eyes to the white slashes in the hills that resembled snow, and thanked God. The life of the quarriers was communal: when one prospered, all prospered; when one starved, all starved. Their life in the quarries was so dangerous that when they parted they did not say "Good-bye" but "*Fa a modr*, go carefully."

Michelangelo liked the masons of Carrara. They were more like him than his own brothers; small, wiry, tireless, taciturn, with the primordial power of men who work stubborn stone. They spoke in clipped monosyllabic hammer strokes, the compact Carrarino language Michelangelo had had to learn, for their dialect broke off words the way chips were chiselled off a block, *mama* becoming *ma*; *brasa*, embers, becoming *bra*.

One morning he joined a stream of quarriers on their way to the Polvaccio quarry, where he had found his best marble for Julius's tomb eleven years before. The owner of the quarry, called The Barrel from his enormous round torso, greeted him heartily. "Ah, Buonarroti, today we have your great block."

"Permit me to hope."

The Barrel grasped his arm, led him to the area where water-soaked

wooden pegs had been driven into a V-shaped incision and, in the natural course of swelling, had forced an opening in the solid marble cliff which the quarriers were now attacking with levers and sledge hammers, driving the pegs deeper to dislodge the marble from its bed. The foreman cried, "Fall below!" and the workmen sawing blocks fled to the edge of the flat working area. The topmost block ripped from its hold with the sound of a falling tree, landed with tremendous impact in the level work space below, splitting according to its cracks. When Michelangelo studied the huge jagged block he was disappointed.

"A beautiful piece of meat, no?" The Barrel said.

"It is good. But it is veined."

"The cut is near perfect."

"I must have perfect," Michelangelo replied.

The Barrel lost his temper. "A month we quarry for you, and not one ducat do we see."

"I will pay you much money . . . for white statuary marble."

"God makes marble. Complain to Him."

"Not until I am convinced that there are not whiter blocks behind these."

"You want me to cut down my whole peak?"

"I will have thousands of ducats to spend for the façade of San Lorenzo. You will have your share."

The Barrel turned away, a scowl on his face, grumbling something which sounded as though he were calling him "Big Noise."

Michelangelo picked up his jacket and dinner, struck out for Ravaccione, using an old goat trail that gave him but a few inches of security as he moved down the cliff. He reached the quarry at ten o'clock. There he was disappointed for a second time that morning; a new cut of marble showed soft fissures.

"A beautiful block," said the owner, hovering near. "You buy?"

"Perhaps. I will see."

The owner's face set in a grim expression. Michelangelo was about to move on to the next quarry when he heard the sound of the horn echoing up and down the valleys. The quarriers froze: one of their members had been hurt, perhaps killed. No further work would be done until the following morning, and none then, if there should be a funeral to attend.

Michelangelo circled to the bottom of the town, entered the Market of the Pigs, admitted himself to his two-room lodging at the back of apothecary Pelliccia's house. He learned from Signora Pelliccia that her husband had gone to attend the injured man. There was a doctor in Carrara but few of the quarriers used him, saying, "Nature cures and the doctors collect."

Signora Pelliccia had saved Michelangelo some of their midday dinner. He was finishing the *minestrone* when a groom arrived with a note from the Marquis of Carrara, requesting that Michelangelo come at once to his castle, the Rocca Malaspina.

The Rocca was a fortress bastion built in the twelfth century. It had crenellated defence towers, a moat and thick stone walls. Lately it had been converted into an elegantly decorated palace.

The marquis was waiting at the head of a majestic flight of stairs. He was tall, courtly, commanding, with a long thin face and a luxuriant beard. "It was kind of you to come, Maestro Buonarroti," he said, leading Michelangelo to his panelled library. "There is some unpleasantness, I fear. Do you remember a name that a quarry owner called you?"

"I thought I heard one of them call me 'Big Noise.' "

"In Carrarino that means to be a complainer, not to accept anything. The owners say you don't know your own mind."

"They're partly right. Pope Leo promised me a thousand ducats to buy marble, but nothing has arrived."

"May I make a suggestion? Sign two or three modest contracts for marble to be delivered in the future. The quarry owners will be reassured. A number who have quarried blocks for you fear they have cut too much and may have to idle the men. Only a few weeks' beans and flour separate these people from hunger. Threaten this thin margin and you become their enemy."

"I will do as you suggest."

Within the next weeks he signed two contracts. Tension in the area vanished; but he could not dissipate his own tension. Although the Rovere heirs had buckled under to the Pope's demands, drawing up a third contract which further cut down the size of the tomb and extended the time limit to nine years, Michelangelo knew that they were outraged. Pope Leo had blandly assured the Roveres that Michelangelo could continue to carve their tomb marbles while he did those for the

Medici; but no one, least of all Michelangelo, was fooled by this promise.

News from Florence was joyless. Giuliano had died. Young Lorenzo de' Medici, son of Piero, now ruled Florence. His smallest act was dictated by Alfonsina, his Roman mother, and by Cardinal Giulio. The Republic had come to an end, the elected councils banished, the constitution outlawed. Buonarroto's shop was operating at a loss. He needed more money. He had brought his wife, Bartolommea, into the family house to live. He kept expressing the hope that Michelangelo would like her. She was a good woman, with a quiet sweetness.

Michelangelo wrote to his brother, "Let us pray that she will produce sons to continue the Buonarroti name."

When the quarries ceased work in the heavy autumn rains, he returned to Rome and a reception at the Vatican. As he knelt to kiss the Pope's ring he noted that Leo's double chin was cascading over the collar of his ermine robe, the fleshy cheeks almost hiding the small sickly mouth.

Michelangelo spread his plans for San Lorenzo on a desk. The Pope was pleased, and agreed to pay twenty-five thousand ducats for the façade. "But one thing must be changed," Giulio added quietly. "The marble must come from Pietrasanta. They have the finest statuary marble in the world."

"Yes, Your Grace, I have heard. But there is no road. The Roman engineers tried to open one and failed."

"They did not try hard enough."

Michelangelo surmised that more than marble was involved.

"The Carraresi are a rebellious lot," the Pope explained, "while the people of Pietrasanta and Seravezza are loyal Tuscans. They have signed over their quarries to Florence. Thus we shall secure the purest marble for only the cost of labour."

"I don't believe it is humanly possible to quarry in Pietrasanta, Holiness," protested Michelangelo. "The blocks would have to come out of stone precipices a mile high."

"You will make the trip to Monte Altissimo and report on it."

HE RETURNED to Carrara and, when the Pope's thousand ducats for marble purchases arrived at last, he put out of his mind any worry about the Pietrasanta quarry and began buying marble almost in a fever. But he received a stinging letter from the Vatican: the Pope

wanted Pietrasanta marble. He told no one of his destination, but arranged to have a horse to take him down the coast road to the quarry. The Pietrasantans' houses were built round a square with a superb view of the Tyrrhenian Sea. Above towered impregnable Monte Altissimo.

There was a narrow wagon road between Pietrasanta and the hill town of Seravezza. At Seravezza everything was unrelieved stone, the houses interlocked round a cobbled piazza. He found a room for the night, and a guide in a husky boy called Antò.

They left Seravezza in the pitch dark before dawn. Where the trail into the hills ended they had to cut through thickets of undergrowth. They climbed straight up dark stone ranges, rock formations that looked as though they had been made as steps for the gods. They descended into dark clammy gorges, then climbed on hands and knees up the next range. By mid-morning they emerged at the top of a shrub-covered promontory. Between Michelangelo and Monte Altissimo was only a sharp hogback, and beyond this a cañon out of which rose the fearsome Alps. Michelangelo sat on a boulder looking upward.

"With the help of God, and the whole French army, one might get a road built to this point. But how could anyone build a road up that perpendicular wall? Well, let's get on, Antò. I want to see how good the marbles are that we can't bring down."

The marbles were perfect: outcroppings of purest white statuary. He found a *poggio* where the Romans had dug, fragments of a marble block they had excavated. After the struggle to keep their footing up the rocky ravines and gorges until they had passed the snow line, it was clear to Michelangelo why the emperors had used Carrara marble to build Rome. Yet he ached to set hammer and chisel to this shining stone, the purest he had ever seen.

It was dusk by the time he came down to Carrara. He noticed that the farmers in the fields did not appear to see him, and when he entered the Porta Ghibellina the townspeople in front of their shops suddenly became busy. He walked into the apothecary's shop where Pelliccia, the apothecary, was grinding medications on a slab of marble. "What has happened? I left yesterday morning a trusted Carrarino. I return tonight a Tuscan."

"It's your trip up Monte Altissimo. The opening of quarries in Pietrasanta could destroy us."

"I shall report to His Holiness that no marble can be brought down from Monte Altissimo"

He made a contract for another fifty cart loads of Carrara marble and wrote his report to Rome The Pope answered "His Holiness wills that all work be done with marble from Pietrasanta and no other"

He looked for a house to rent in Pietrasanta Within an hour of his return to Carrara a crowd, several hundred strong, began to gather in the piazza beneath the apothecary's windows Michelangelo stood behind the curtained doors listening to the murmur grow Then someone spied him, and the quarriers began shouting "Big Noise! Big Noise!"

Michelangelo threw open the window and held his arms out "This is not my doing You must believe me"

"*Bastardo!* You have sold us!"

"Have I not bought your marble? I will suffer more from this than you"

"You will not suffer in the belly!" A hundred arms were raised and stones filled the air like hail, shattering the windows A large stone struck him on the forehead Blood began to trickle down his face He made no move to staunch the flow The crowd saw what had happened and within minutes the piazza was deserted, with only the stones and broken glass to tell what had happened

He rented a house in Pietrasanta But his attempts to recruit quarriers in Carrara were coldly rebuffed The Carraresi would not ship the marble he had already contracted and paid for In desperation he made the journey back to Settignano, to the Topolino family He explained his plight They, too, had contracts to fill, but the family decided that Gilberto, the youngest, should accompany Michelangelo

During the following days he assembled a crew of twelve stone cutters Not one quarrier in the lot! How could he tackle a savage mountain with this inexperienced crew? But on his way home to Florence, he came across Donato Benti, an unemployed sculptor willing to work for him as a quarrier Then, in Florence, he learned that the Pope had decreed he must also supply marble for repairs to the Duomo In exchange, the Duomo and the Wool Guild agreed to pay the salary of an accountant named Vieri who would act as commissary, to arrange supplies and keep the accounts They would, in addition, finance his road since they were eager to develop the resources of Tuscany

He had a happy visit at home, for his sister-in-law Bartholommea, who had already borne a daughter, Cecca, was delivered of a healthy boy. At long last the Buonarroti-Simoni name was safe for the future.

THE ACCOUNTANT, Vieri, Gilberto Topolino and Benti moved into the Pietrasanta house with him. Michelangelo found a house in Seravezza for the remaining workers. He marked out the most promising route to the quarry area, set the men to work to cut a safe ledge for passage. A forge was set up to build iron-supported wagons for transporting the marble columns to the sea.

Just one crag below the summit Michelangelo unearthed a formation of pure statuary marble, crystalline white, flawless. He instructed the men to carve a level area on the peak from which they could quarry. The marble ran straight back in a solid white sheet, an entire cliff. "All we have to do," he exclaimed exultantly, "is strip out great blocks that have been here since Genesis."

"And get them off this mountain," added Benti, gazing down the five or six miles to the sea.

The first weeks of quarrying were a total waste. Michelangelo tried to show the men how the Carrarinos quarried. Marble was temperamental, easily shattered because of its delicacy, and the Settignano stonemasons were not experienced quarrymen. At the end of the month Michelangelo had not yet quarried one ducat's worth of usable marble.

A road builder arrived from Florence: Bocca, The Mouth, hairy from his skull to his toes, an illiterate labourer on the roads in his youth, who had learned to draw maps and boss road crews. He had a reputation for pushing through roads in record time. Within ten days he had mapped the simplest possible route to the base of Monte Altissimo. The only trouble was that the road was not directed towards those places where the marble was to be found. Michelangelo took Bocca with him to the quarries. "You see, Bocca, I could never get my blocks to your road. The road must reach the quarries!"

"This is where I build. I'm road. You're marble."

It was a warm night. Michelangelo walked for miles while he wrestled with his problem. He could complain to Pope Leo, have another road builder sent. But what assurance would he have that it wouldn't be another Bocca? He groaned. He must get rid of Bocca and

build the road himself! He mapped the road, laid out stakes. At two points he chose to tunnel through solid rock rather than try to push the road up and down a hogback. For a terminus he chose a spot at the base of the two ravines down which he planned to lower the blocks. By the end of June, Vieri said sternly: "You'll have to stop building now. There's no more money."

"I can't stop. Draw on my own eight hundred ducats."

"But you may never get the money back."

"Spend it. Until I get the marble out, the Holy Father won't let me be a sculptor."

From sunrise to dark he was up and down the mountains on a mule, watching progress. By mid-September the road was passable and he had managed to quarry an enormous column; he started to move it down the ravine. It was roped half a dozen times round its width and its length, crow-barred on to wooden rollers. Down the slide, on either side, stakes had been driven into the ground, angling outward. The ropes from the column, tied to these stakes, were the only hold the crews had on the marble.

Down it went, held by some thirty men. Michelangelo directed the men handling the rollers to pick up the one at the rear, when the end of the marble had passed, and run to put it under the front; the men at the stakes held the ropes with all their might until the column had slid past them, then ran down the trail to the next stakes to tie up their ropes and apply the brakes. Hours passed, the sun rose high, the men sweated and strained.

Down the long steep ravine the column slid, the crew exerting all its strength to slow its movement. By late afternoon they were only thirty-five yards from the road. Michelangelo was jubilant; very soon now they would slide the column on to the loading platform, from which it would be moved on to a wagon drawn by a team of thirty-two oxen.

He never quite knew how the accident happened. An agile young Pisan named Gino knelt to put another roller under the front of the column. Suddenly something snapped, and the column started to move on its own. There were shouts: "Gino! Get out! Quick!"

But it was too late. The column rolled over Gino, swerved towards Michelangelo. He threw himself over the side of a ledge, rolling a number of feet before he could break his fall.

The men stood paralysed as the flawless column picked up speed, smashed its way downward, hit the loading platform and broke into a hundred pieces.

Gilberto and Michelangelo knelt over Gino. "His neck is broken," said Gilberto. "Killed instantly."

In his mind Michelangelo heard the mournful sound of a horn echoing from peak to peak. He picked up the boy's body, stumbled blindly down the rest of the descent. He mounted his mule, still holding Gino, while the others led the way into Seravezza.

TORRENTIAL RAINS inundated the piazza and all work was shut down. The crews returned home. Michelangelo's accounting showed that he had spent thirty ducats beyond the eight hundred advanced to him at the beginning of the year. He had loaded not a single block. The lone consolation was the attendance of a group of Carrarini quarriers at Gino's burial.

Apothecary Pelliccia linked his arm through Michelangelo's as they left the cemetery. "This death brought us to our senses, Michelangelo. We treated you badly. But we have suffered from the loss of contracts from agents and sculptors waiting to buy from the Pope's quarries at Pietrasanta."

Now the Carrarini boatmen would transport his blocks, still on the beach, to the docks in Florence.

He put his few personal possessions in a saddlebag and made his way home to Florence. He was still too shaken to attempt carving, and so he started to build a studio on the Via Mozza.

By February, his workshop completed, he brought half a dozen of his nine-foot Carrara blocks for Julius's tomb from the Arno storehouse. He had only to return to Pietrasanta, excavate the columns he needed for San Lorenzo; then he could settle down on the Via Mozza for years of work for the Roveres and Medici.

He built a model of the façade of San Lorenzo, making wax figures to represent his sculptures. Pope Leo signed a contract for forty thousand ducats, payable over eight years.

He did not ask Gilberto Topolino to go back to the quarries; that would have been unfair; but most of the others agreed to join him. Rather than being frightened by Pietrasanta, the masons felt that with

the road completed and the quarries open the hardest work was already done. Still disturbed by the accident that had killed Gino, he evolved a system of iron rings which could be driven into the surface of the block, giving the crews a surer grip on the marble as it was brought down the ravine.

The Pope had been rightly informed: there was enough magnificent marble here to supply the world for a thousand years, and now the crystalline cliffs yielded superbly. There were no more accidents. In a few weeks five superb blocks were loaded on to wagons and taken to barges on the beach.

The work was progressing satisfactorily when, suddenly, Michelangelo was recalled to Florence. He reported at once to Cardinal Giulio in the Medici palace.

"Your Grace, am I recalled? In a few months I would have had nine giant columns on the beach of Pietrasanta."

"There is enough marble now. We are abandoning the façade for San Lorenzo." Michelangelo was unnerved by the hostility in the cardinal's voice as Giulio continued: "The floor of the Duomo needs repaving. Since the Duomo and Wool Guild Boards paid the cost of the road, they are entitled to the marble you have excavated."

"You would pave the Duomo floor with the finest statuary marbles ever quarried? Why do you humiliate me in this way?"

Giulio repeated icily, "The cathedral needs paving."

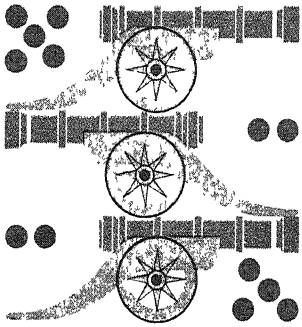
Michelangelo clenched his fists to stop his trembling. "It is nearly three years now since His Holiness took me off the Rovere tomb. In all that time I have not been able to carve one inch of marble. Of the twenty-three hundred ducats you have sent me, I have spent eighteen hundred on marble, quarries and roads. I do not take into account the years I have wasted, the insults put upon me. I do not take into account my house in Rome, which I left, my marble and blocked-out statues. I only want one thing now: to be free!"

Cardinal Giulio had listened carefully to Michelangelo's complaints. His thin, smooth face grew dark.

"The Holy Father will review your case. You are dismissed."

Michelangelo stumbled down the long hallway, his feet carrying him to what had been *Il Magnifico's* study. He cried aloud to the long-departed spirit of Lorenzo: "I am ruined!"

BOOK NINE
The War



WHERE DID a man go when he had been destroyed? Where else but to work, bolting the door of his studio, standing his blocks of marble round the walls as though they were soldiers guarding his privacy. The studio had ceilings thirty-five feet high, windows to the north, spacious enough to allow him to carve several tomb figures at the same time. This was where a sculptor belonged, in his workshop.

But the tighter he bolted his studio door against the intrusion of the outside world, the more evident it became that trouble was man's natural state. News reached him that Leonardo da Vinci, who had fled to France to escape the Pope's displeasure several years before, had died there, unwanted and unhonoured by his countrymen. A letter from Rome told him that Raphael was ill, obliged to turn more and more of his work over to apprentices. Pope Leo's political judgment had proved unsound in backing Francis I of France against Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor. In Germany, Martin Luther was challenging papal supremacy, crying: "I don't know if the Christian faith can endure any other head of the Universal Church on earth save Christ."

As the months passed he broke into four nine-foot blocks; these were to be four huge Captive figures for Julius's tomb: a somnolent Young Giant, trying to free himself from his imprisonment in the stone of time; an Awakening Giant, bursting forth from his mountain chrysalis; an Atlas, holding God's earth on his shoulders; and a Bearded Giant, old and tired. By the spring the four Captive-Giants had become visible under his driving power.

Then Pope Leo and Cardinal Giulio decided to build a sacristy on to San Lorenzo to house a large Medici tomb. Unembarrassed by the fact that he had cancelled his contract for the façade, Pope Leo sent his brother-in-law Salviati to Michelangelo asking him to make sculptures for the new chapel and to design the sacristy.

"I am no longer a Medici sculptor," cried Michelangelo. "Another two years and I can complete Julius's tomb. The Rovere family will owe me eighty-five hundred ducats."

"You need the goodwill of the Medici," Salviati said.

"I also need money."

But Salviati was right: he could not afford the Medici's disfavour. Either he worked for them, or he might not work at all.

MICHELANGELO designed an austere sarcophagus for either side of the new chapel, each holding two reclining allegorical figures: Night and Day on one, Dawn and Dusk on the other; two male, two female; great brooding figures, which would represent man's cycle. This plan was accepted. Then in November Pope Leo caught a chill. By December 1, 1521, he was dead. At the Requiem Mass Michelangelo joined in the prayer for Leo's soul. Later, he whispered to Granacci: "Do you suppose heaven can offer any part of the entertainment Leo provided for himself at the Vatican?"

"I doubt it. God would not spend that much money."

With Leo dead, the project of the Medici chapel became as cold and bleak as the Tuscan winter. The College of Cardinals elected sixty-two-year-old Adrian of Utrecht, a practical-minded Fleming. Cardinal Giulio fled to Florence, for Pope Adrian was a highly moral churchman who had disapproved of the Medici pontificate. The Pope listened sympathetically to the Rovere family, headed by the Duke of Urbino, agreeing that they should bring an action against Michelangelo for failure to fulfil his contract on the Julius tomb. The action was a punitive one, exaggerating the amount he had been paid, taking no account of the other work Julius had forced him to do. With the Pope's backing, it was a disaster. He asked Granacci: "How could so much have happened to me when I have been simply so full of love for marble, so consumed to carve? I have talent, energy, enthusiasm, singleness of purpose. What am I missing? *Fortuna,* luck?"

"Last out the bad times, *caro*. There is more work to do."

"But what if the Pope won't let me work?"

Fortunately for Michelangelo, God soon gathered Pope Adrian to his everlasting reward. This time Giulio de' Medici garnered enough votes in the College of Cardinals to get himself elected Pope. As Pope

Clement VII he sent word immediately after his coronation: Michelangelo must resume work on the chapel.

He was like a man who has barely escaped death. Pope Clement put him on a life pension of fifty ducats a month, gave him a workshop by San Lorenzo. The Rovere heirs were persuaded to drop their action.

He went one evening to the Rucellai palace to hear Machiavelli read the first chapter of his history of Florence. The Plato Academy, bitter against Pope Clement, was at the centre of a plot to restore the Republic. Michelangelo heard stories that Clement, called by his enemies "the dregs of the Medici," was making fatal errors of judgment. He rejected the overtures of the Holy Roman Emperor, and in the incessant wars among the surrounding nations he consistently backed the wrong side; though, truth to tell, Clement changed sides so often that no one could keep up with his intrigues. In Germany and Holland thousands of Catholics were abandoning their religion for the reformation which Clement refused to carry out within the Church.

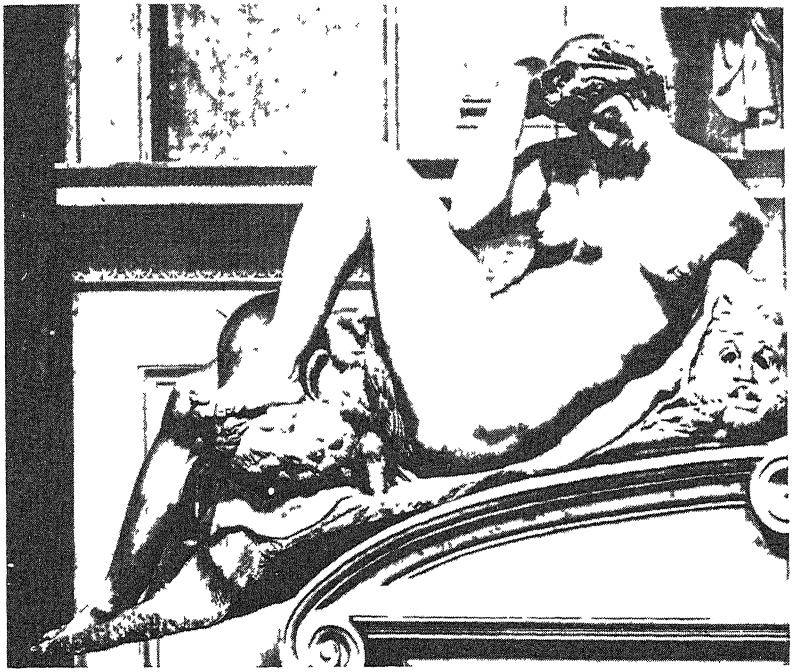
A cardinal appointed by the Pope, Passerini of Cortona, ruled Florence autocratically and Clement rejected all appeals to replace this man whom the Florentines found crude, greedy, contemptuous of their Signoria. The Florentines were waiting only for an advantageous moment to rise, seize arms and once again drive out the Medici.

Their opportunity came when Florence was caught in the wars between the papacy and the Holy Roman Empire. Armies from both sides were threatening the city. But Cardinal Passerini refused to defend it. The citizens rose in revolt and civil war began.

Michelangelo joined the Republican forces defending the Palazzo della Signoria just before pro-Medici forces attacked the doors with pikes. From the windows and the parapet above, desks, tables and chairs rained down on the soldiers. A heavy wooden bench hurtled straight for the David. "Look out!" Michelangelo cried, as though the statue might dodge. But the bench struck. The left arm snapped off below the elbow and fell to the piazza, broken.

The crowd drew back. The soldiers turned to stare. He felt himself moving towards the sculpture. The crowd opened, murmuring: "It is Michelangelo. Let him pass."

He stood below the David, gazing up into the pensive, resolute, beautiful face. Goliath had not scratched him; but civil war had come within



Alinari photo

Night Medici Chapel, Florence

inches of destroying him completely. Though Michelangelo could not know it, it would be years before the statue was repaired.

Meanwhile, the Emperor's army swept south to Rome, breached the walls, and forced Pope Clement to flee to the fortress of Sant' Angelo. He remained a prisoner there while mercenaries looted and burnt Rome, destroying works of art, smashing altars, lighting fires on the marble floors of the Vatican, putting out the eyes in paintings. Heartsick, Michelangelo thought of his Pietà and the Sistine ceiling, the Moses and the two Captives. With Clement a prisoner, the Republic was again proclaimed in Florence. The city-state adopted Machiavelli's new plan for a citizens' militia, trained to defend the Republic against invaders. The Signoria was aided by a Council of Eighty, chosen from the old families. Trade was active again, the city people happy. Few cared what happened to Pope Clement; but Michelangelo was vitally interested. He had put years of loving work into the Medici tombs.

At the end of 1527 the tide turned again. A virulent plague decimated the Holy Roman Emperor's armies, and they were also threatened by a French army financed by the Pope. A few months later, the plague struck Florence. People came down with crushing headaches, pain in the limbs, fever. In three days they were dead. If people dropped in the streets they were left there; if they died in their homes their families fled. Thousands perished. The city became a mortuary.

Buonarroto died in Michelangelo's arms. While he mourned, he drew up a paper paying back to Buonarroto's wife the dowry she had brought with her; she would need it to get a second husband. He arranged for his eleven-year-old niece, Cecca, to be educated in a convent, set aside assets to pay for the education of his nephew, Lionardo. He did not greatly care whether he fell victim now. "Perhaps Buonarroto is the fortunate one," he thought.

He escaped, and the plague abated. People filtered down from the hills; the government returned to the city. But Pope Clement now made an alliance with the Holy Roman Emperor, and sent an army to wipe out the Republic and once again restore the Medici to power. Michelangelo was summoned before the current gonfaloniere.

"Since you work in stone, Buonarroti," he said, "you can surely design what Florence needs now: walls that cannot be breached."

Dutifully he explored the several miles of city wall, noting that neither the walls nor the defence towers were in good repair. More towers for cannon were needed. The anchor of the defence line would have to be the campanile of San Miniato, from whose height the defenders could command most of the ground over which the enemy troops would have to charge.

He reported these requirements to the gonfaloniere, and work went ahead at full speed, for the Pope's army was reported to be moving on Florence from several directions. Michelangelo and a hundred peasants built bastions, high walls of brick made of pounded earth mixed with tow and cattle dung. Michelangelo was officially made Governor General of the Fortifications. There was no further thought of sculpture. Nor could he cry, "War is not my trade." Florence had called on him in its time of crisis.

He began a series of deep ditches outside the wall, using the excavated earth to form barricades. He secured permission to level all buildings

between the defence walls and the encircling foothills a mile to the south; farmers helped to knock down houses that had been in their families for hundreds of years.

General Malatesta had been brought from Perugia to serve as one of the defence commanders. He quarrelled with Michelangelo's plans. "You have thrown up too many walls. Take your peasants away, and let my soldiers defend Florence."

Malatesta seemed cold, devious. That night Michelangelo roaming the base of his ramparts, came upon the eight artillery pieces that had been given to Malatesta to defend the San Miniato wall. They were lying outside the walls, unguarded. Michelangelo awoke the sleeping general. "Why are you exposing your artillery pieces?"

"Are you the commander of this army?" Malatesta was livid.

"Just of the defence walls."

"Then go and make your cow-dung brick, and don't tell a soldier how to fight."

Everywhere he went he heard stories against Malatesta: he had yielded Perugia without a battle; his men would not fight the Pope's troops at Arezzo; when the armies reached Florence, Malatesta would surrender the city. . . .

The papal armies were now camped thirty thousand strong on the hills beyond his southern defence walls. From the tower of San Miniato, Michelangelo gazed at the hundreds of enemy tents set up a mile away.

He was awakened at dawn by artillery fire, concentrated against the tower of San Miniato. If it could be knocked down, the Pope's forces would pour into the city. One hundred and fifty pieces of papal artillery fired steadily. Whole sections of brick and stone were blasted out by the exploding cannon balls. The attack lasted for two hours. When it was finished Michelangelo let himself out by a tunnel and stood at the base of the bell tower, surveying the damage.

He asked for volunteers to refit the shattered stone into the walls, sent out runners to collect crews of masons and quarriers, at dusk set them to rebuilding the tower. They worked all night: but it would take time for the cement to harden. If the enemy artillery opened fire too soon, his defence would be levelled. He gazed up at the campanile, its crenellated cornice wider by four feet than the shaft of the tower. If there were a way to hang something from those parapets that would

absorb the impact of the iron and stone cannon balls before they could strike the tower itself

By first light the militia were beating on the doors of the wool shops and the warehouses. Next they hunted the city for mattress covers. By the time the sun was up dozens of stout covers were stuffed with wool and suspended by ropes across the face of the tower. When the Pope's officers turned their artillery on the campanile, their cannon balls struck the heavy paddings which hung four feet out from the wet stone walls and fell harmlessly into the ditch below. At noon the enemy abandoned the attack.

Heavy rains began to fall. The open mile of cleared fields between his walls and the enemy became a bog. There could be no attack now.

Michelangelo spent the days on the parapets; at night he slipped into the sacristy where his statues for the tombs now stood, and carved by candlelight. The chapel was cold, full of shadows; but he was not alone. His figures were familiar friends: the Dawn, the Dusk; telling him of art as a means of conquering death.

In the spring the war was resumed, but none of the battles except the one against starvation took place in Florence. The papal army had cut off supplies from the sea. Meat vanished first, then oil, greens, flour, wine. People began eating asses, dogs, cats. Summer heat baked the stones, the water supply failed, the Arno dried up, the plague struck again. By mid-July five thousand were dead within the city.

Florence had only one chance to survive, through its heroic general, Francesco Ferrucci, whose army was near Pisa. Plans were laid for him to attack and lift the siege. But Malatesta betrayed the Republic to the Pope's generals. Ferrucci was defeated and killed; Florence capitulated. Malatesta's troops opened the gates and Pope Clement's representatives entered the city to take control. Those members of the government who could, fled; others were hanged. All heads of the militia were condemned.

"You'd better get out of the city this very night," Michelangelo was warned. "The Pope will show no mercy."

He made his way by back passages to the Arno, crossed the river and slipped into the bell tower of San Niccolò, first knocking at the house next door, which belonged to the sons of old Beppe, to let them know he was taking refuge until Malatesta left Florence. He spent the night

staring down on the terrain he had levelled to protect the city-state. A one-armed David now stood as a symbol of the vanquished Republic. Lorenzo had said that the forces of destruction were everywhere. That was all Michelangelo had known since the days of Savonarola: conflict. And now here he was cowering in an ancient bell tower.

Before cock-crow each morning he descended to find food and water and hear the news of the day. He learned that Florence knew where he was hiding, but the hatred of Pope Clement was so intense that he was not only safe but had become a hero. Lodovico, whom Michelangelo had sent to Pisa during the siege, had returned safely.

In mid-November he learned through an intermediary that Pope Clement had pardoned him for his part in the warfare. His pension was to be restored, and he was to return to work in the sacristy of San Lorenzo.

His studio in the Via Mozza had been thoroughly ransacked by the papal troops; but none of his marble had been disturbed. After three years of war he could begin to carve again. Sitting among his folio of drawings, he turned over a drawing-sheet and with deep emotion wrote a poem ending:

. . . If I was made for art, from childhood given
A prey for burning beauty to devour,
I blame the mistress I was born to serve.

Clement's son, known as Alessandro the Moor because of his swarthy skin and thick lips, was made sovereign of the city-state of Florence. He was a dissolute, ugly youth of low intelligence and rapacious appetites. With his father's troops on hand to enforce his slightest wish, he murdered his opponents, debauched the youth of the city, wiped out its last semblances of freedom, and quickly brought it to a state of anarchy.

Equally quickly, Michelangelo fought with Alessandro. When Alessandro asked him to design a new fort, Michelangelo declined. When Alessandro wished to show the Medici sacristy to the Viceroy of Naples, Michelangelo locked it.

Giovanni Spina, appointed by the Pope to handle his Florentine art projects, cautioned him:

"Your conduct is dangerous."

"I'm safe until I complete the tomb. The Pope has made that clear to his thick-skulled son . . . or I would have been dead long ago." He wiped the marble dust from his face, and exclaimed with gratification: "This chapel will outlive Alessandro, even if I don't. With a hammer and chisel in my hands I feel that I am compensating for the spiritual degradation of Florence."

By September he had finished Dawn and Night, Day and Dusk. He was emaciated and racked by a cough as he picked up hammer and chisel to begin the last figures. "It won't do, you know," Granacci reproved him. "Death from over-indulgence is a form of suicide, whether it's from work or wine."

"If I don't work twenty hours a day I'll never finish."

He fell ill with a high fever. When it passed he was so weak his legs could barely hold him.

The Pope sent a carriage and driver to Florence, ordering Michelangelo to come to Rome to recuperate in the southern sun, and to hear about an exciting new project he had envisaged. Clement invited Michelangelo's friends in the Florentine colony for dinner at the Vatican to amuse him. His solicitude for Michelangelo's health was genuine, almost like that of a beloved brother. Then he revealed his desire: would Michelangelo paint a Last Judgment on the altar wall of the Sistine Chapel?

At the dinner that night Michelangelo met a young man of singular beauty, like that of the youths he had painted behind the Doni Holy Family. He had eyes of a luminous grey-blue, a classical nose and mouth, a high, rounded forehead, chestnut hair, the rose-bronzed skin of the youths who competed in the stadia of ancient Greece.

Tommaso de' Cavalieri, twenty-two, well educated, serious, was the heir of a patrician Roman family. Ambitious to become a painter, he asked eagerly if he might become Michelangelo's apprentice. Michelangelo replied that he must return to Florence to finish the Medici chapel before doing his Last Judgment; but they could draw together when he returned to Rome. Meantime he would send drawings which Tommaso could study.

Lodovico's ninetieth birthday fell on an exhilarating day in June 1534. Florence glistened like a precious stone in its prong of mountains.

Michelangelo gathered the Buonarroti family to dinner. Lodovico, so feeble that he had to be propped with pillows, ate only a few spoonfuls of soup, then fell back. Michelangelo picked his father up in his arms. He weighed no more than a bundle of sticks. He put him in bed, tucked a blanket round him. The old man turned his head slightly so that he could see his desk with its neatly stacked account books. A smile came over his ash-grey lips.

"Michelagnolo." The pet name. Lodovico had not used it for years. "I wanted . . . to live to be ninety."

"And so you have."

"But now . . . I'm tired. . . ."

"Rest. I'll close the door."

"Michelagnolo . . . you will take care of . . . the boys?"

Michelangelo thought, "The boys! In their middle fifties!" Aloud he replied, "Our family is all I have, Father."

"You'll give my grandson . . . Lionardo . . . a wool shop?"

"Yes, Father."

"Then all is well. I have kept my family . . . together. We gained back . . . the money . . . my father lost."

Lionardo brought the priest. Lodovico died quietly. Michelangelo had loved his father, just as in his flinty Tuscan way Lodovico had loved his son. The world would seem empty without him. It had not been Lodovico's fault that only one of his five sons had been an earner. That was why he had had to work Michelangelo so hard, to make up for the others. Michelangelo was proud that he had been able to fulfil Lodovico's ambition.

Later, he stood alone in the sacristy under the dome he had designed and built. Standing between his exquisitely carved sarcophagi, each to hold its two giant figures, he felt that *Il Magnifico* would have been gratified. He wrote instructions for his apprentices to mount Day and Night on their sarcophagus, Dusk and Dawn opposite; then he packed his saddlebags. He mounted and crossed Florence, leaving it by the Porta Romana. At the top of the rise he turned to look back at the exquisite city of stone nestled under its red tile roofs. It was hard to take leave of one's city; hard to feel that, close to sixty, he could not count on returning.

Resolutely he turned his horse south towards Rome.

BOOK TEN
Love



ROME, AFTER its latest warfare, seemed in a worse state of ruin than when he had first seen it in 1496. He had hired a new, twenty-year-old apprentice and steward, a quiet, steady young man named Urbino.

With Urbino he walked through his own dilapidated premises on the Macello dei Corvi. Most of the furniture had been stolen, and some of the blocks for Julius's tomb. The Moses and the two Captives had not been injured.

Two days after Michelangelo reached Rome, Pope Clement VII died, and the city poured into the streets in a paroxysm of joy. At the Medici palace Michelangelo found the Florentine exiles jubilant. Clement's son Alessandro, ruler of Florence, could now be replaced by Ippolito, son of the beloved Giuliano.

Twenty-five-year-old Cardinal Ippolito greeted him with an affectionate smile. A dozen of his old friends thronged about him. They had plotted to get rid of Alessandro; now they could act openly. "You'll help us, Michelangelo?" asked Cardinal Giovanni Salviati, son of Lorenzo's daughter Lucrezia. "Most certainly. Allesandro is a wild beast."

Contessina's son, Cardinal Niccolò Ridolfi, said, "There is only one obstacle: Charles V. If the Emperor were on our side, we could march on Florence. There have been reports, Michelangelo, that he has expressed interest in your work. Would you carve or paint for him if it would help our cause?" Michelangelo assured them that he would.

Back at home, he asked himself over and over again whether he was relieved to have the crushing burden of the Last Judgment off his shoulders. The altar wall of the Sistine would have required a minimum of five years to paint; yet as his ducats poured out for refurbishing his house he saw that he would soon be in need of money.

Balducci, as wide as he was tall, but of hard flesh and red cheeks, now bringing up grandchildren in profusion, exploded: "Of course

you're in trouble! Spending all those years in Florence without my financial wizardry. But you're in safe hands now. I'll invest all the money you earn."

Early the next morning the Duke of Urbino came to call, followed by a servant with a box containing the contracts for Julius's tomb. The duke was a ferocious-looking man, with a trench-lined battlefield for a face. He informed Michelangelo that the wall had been prepared for the tomb; then he took from the leather box the latest agreement and flung it at Michelangelo's feet. "There will be no more Medici to protect you. If you do not complete this contract by May of next year, I shall force you to fulfil the 1516 contract: twenty-five statues, larger than life."

The duke stormed out. But in the matter of the Rovere tomb the fates were as much against the Duke of Urbino as against Michelangelo. On October 11, 1534, the College of Cardinals elected Alessandro Farnese to the papacy; he became Pope Paul III. He had been educated by Lorenzo, and had acquired a life-long love of art and learning. At once he sent a courier to the house on the Macello dei Corvi: would Michelangelo Buonarroti come to the Vatican palace?

It was the old story. The Pope demanded that he work on the Last Judgment, put the contract with the Duke of Urbino out of his mind. "Is the Holy See to be intimidated by a war lord?" he asked. "I am determined to have you serve me."

Michelangelo kissed the Pope's ring, backed out of the throne-room. Returning to his house, he sank into an old leather chair. Almost immediately a sharp knock on the door straightened him up from his collapsed position. His assistant, Urbino, admitted two Swiss guards, tall fair-haired giants in identical yellow and green costumes, sent to announce that Michelangelo Buonarroti would receive, the following mid-morning, a visit from His Holiness Paul III. "What refreshment does one serve the Holy Father and his train?" asked Urbino. "I have never seen a Pope, except in procession."

"I wish that that was the only place I had ever seen one," grumbled Michelangelo. "Buy raisin wine and cakes."

The Pope arrived with his cardinals and attendants. Paul smiled benignly on Michelangelo, went quickly to the Moses. The cardinals surrounded the figure in a field of red cassocks. Ercole Gonzaga, Cardinal of Mantua, the art authority of the Vatican, declared: "This

Moses alone is sufficient to do honour to Pope Julius. No man could want a more glorious monument."

Pope Paul said, "My son, paint the Last Judgment for me. I will arrange for the Duke of Urbino to settle for the Moses and two Captives."

Michelangelo had not lived through four pontificates without learning when he was outmanoeuvred. But how to summon at sixty the cyclonic powers he had enjoyed at thirty-three?

Next day he walked slowly to St. Peter's. Sangallo's nephew, Antonio, was now its architect, but as far as Michelangelo could tell little had been accomplished in the eighteen years since he had left Rome except the repair of the giant piers and the building of the lowest foundation walls. Two hundred thousand ducats from all over Christendom had been poured into the concrete; but mostly, Michelangelo had learned, into the pockets of the contractors who were erecting St. Peter's as slowly as was humanly possible.

Without knowing that he had so directed his steps, he found himself before the residence of the Cavalieri family. As he dropped the heavy clapper on the door he wondered why it had taken him so long to call on Tommaso de' Cavalieri, who had expressed himself eager to work with him. A servant opened the door, led Michelangelo into a high-ceilinged salon which contained one of the best collections of antique sculpture in Rome. He heard footsteps behind him, turned, and gasped. In the two years since he had seen him, Tommaso had changed from an attractive youth into the most magnificent man Michelangelo had ever seen; even more beautiful than the Greek discus thrower in the salon.

"You've come at last," said Tommaso in his grave and courtly voice.

"I had not wished to bring you my troubles."

"Friends can share troubles."

They gripped each other's arms in a welcoming salute. A warm smile spread over Michelangelo's features. "You know I am to do the Last Judgment for Pope Paul. Up to this moment I had not thought I could summon the courage. Now I am less heavy-hearted."

They climbed a broad flight of stairs to Tommaso's workshop. Tommaso spent half of his day working for the tax commission and as curator of public works, and the other half drawing. On the wall above the table were the drawings Michelangelo had sent from Florence. Spread out over the planks were dozens of sketches. Michelangelo

studied them, exclaimed: "You have a fine talent. I shall serve as your master, and in return you shall help me enlarge my drawings."

They became inseparable. Each morning, by the time the sun hit the top of Trajan's Column, Tommaso had come with a packet of freshly baked rolls for his mid-morning refreshment. They sketched on the Capitoline or in the Forum on Sundays, had supper in each other's homes, spent the evenings in drawing and conversation.

How did he define his feeling for Tommaso? It was different from his dependent love for his family, from the reverence he felt for *Il Magnifico*; his enduring love for Contessina, the unforgotten passion for Clarissa, his friendly love for Granacci. Perhaps this love, coming so late in his life, was indefinable.

HE STOOD alone in the Sistine Chapel, the tumultuous array from Genesis overhead. The fifty-five-by-forty-foot wall on which he was to work had painted tapestries in the bottom zone; above the altar were two Perugino frescoes; then two tall windows; next, portraits of the first two Popes; and in the topmost compartment, two of the lunettes he himself had painted. The wall was fire-blackened, pitted and broken; there was spoilage from damp, and an over-all soiling of dust, grime and smoke from candles. He disliked destroying the Perugino frescoes but since he was also obliterating two of his own paintings no one could think him ruthless. He would seal up the two windows, build a new brick wall slanted outward a foot from ceiling to floor so that dust, dirt and smoke would not adhere. Pope Paul gave his consent to Michelangelo's plans. Michelangelo found himself liking this Pope more and more. Paul was a Latin and Greek scholar, a fine speaker and writer. He was also blessed with a sense of humour.

Michelangelo was happy during these months of steady drawing in his studio. Every man, woman and child was to stand out in full human dignity; for each was an individual and had worth. This was the key to the rebirth of learning and freedom that had been sired in Florence, after the darkness of a thousand years. Never would he, Michelangelo, reduce man to an indistinguishable part of an inchoate mass, not even *en route* to heaven or hell!

One day Tommaso and Cardinal Niccolò Ridolfi arrived at his house. "The Emperor Charles V is coming through Rome," Tommaso said.

"He will visit Vittoria Colonno, the Marchesa di Pescara. He is a long-time friend of her husband's family."

"I do not know the marchesa."

"But I do," replied Tommaso. "I have asked her to invite you to her gathering this Sunday afternoon."

Niccolò, who had Contessina's sombre brown eyes, said, "It would mean a great deal to Florence if you became friends with the marchesa and could be introduced by her to the Emperor."

Tommaso said, "I have long wanted you to meet Vittoria Colonna. She has become the first lady of Rome. She is a rare poet. She is beautiful. She is also a saint."

"Are you in love with the lady?" asked Michelangelo.

Tommaso laughed good-naturedly. "Oh no, she is a woman of forty-five, and has been widowed for the past ten years. Most of the time she stays at a convent. She prefers the austere life."

Vittoria Colonna, daughter of one of the most powerful families in Italy, had married the Neapolitan Marchese di Pescara when each had been nineteen. The honeymoon was short-lived, for the marchese was a general in the service of the Holy Roman Emperor. In the sixteen years of their marriage Vittoria had seldom seen her husband. He had been killed at the Battle of Pavia after heroic action on the field. The lonely Vittoria had spent the long years of separation in study, and had become one of the leading scholars of Italy. She had spent the last ten years giving her service and fortune to the poor.

Late on Sunday afternoon Tommaso called for him and they walked to the gardens of the Convent of San Silvestro al Quirinale, where there were laurels for shade, and old stone benches against walls covered with green ivy. Vittoria Colonna, sitting in the midst of half a dozen men, rose to greet Michelangelo. He had expected to meet an ageing lady in black. Instead he found himself gazing into the deep green eyes of the most vitally lovely woman he had ever seen. She had a regal bearing. Beneath her simple robe he envisaged a ripe figure to complement the large expressive eyes, the long braids of honey-gold hair looped low on her neck, the full red lips. He could not take his eyes from her. Her beauty was like the noonday sun, blinding him with its light. She said, "I welcome you as an old friend, Michelangelo Buonarroti, for your works have spoken to me for many years."

"My works were more fortunate than I, Marchesa."

Vittoria's green eyes clouded.

"I had heard that you were a blunt man who knew no flattery."

"You heard correctly," replied Michelangelo.

She continued: "I have been told that you heard Fra Savonarola preach. It is too bad the words did not strike Rome. Then we would have had our reforms inside the Mother Church."

"You admired Fra Savonarola?"

"He died a martyr to our cause."

Michelangelo realized that he was in the midst of a revolutionary group, highly critical of the practices of the Church and seeking reformation of the clergy. The Inquisition had taken thousands of lives on charges far less serious. He admired the marchesa's courage.

The conversation became general. They spoke of Flemish art, then of the origins of the concept of the Last Judgment. Michelangelo quoted: *"When the son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit down upon the throne of his glory, and all nations will be gathered in his presence, where he will divide men one from the other, as the shepherd divides the sheep from the goats; he will set the sheep on his right, and the goats on his left."* It was many years since a woman's presence had so completely taken possession of him. When they left, Michelangelo asked: "Tommaso, when can we see her again?"

"When she invites us. She goes nowhere."

Two weeks later the marchesa's servant, Foao, arrived with an invitation from the marchesa to come to the chapel of San Silvestro al Quirinale.

His hopes to be alone with her were in vain; as she came to greet him, he saw that the chapel was filled. He recognized illustrious members of the Vatican court and the university faculty. The men began speaking of the art of their own city-states. Michelangelo only half listened, for he was watching Vittoria, sitting beneath a stained-glass window which threw a sheen of variegated colour over her flawless skin.

Suddenly he became aware of a silence. All eyes were turned on him as Vittoria said: "Michelangelo Buonarroti, I have long thought that you have a divine gift and were chosen by God for your great tasks." He searched his mind for an answer but no words came.

"His Holiness has done me the favour of allowing me to build a

nunnery at the foot of Monte Cavallo," she continued. "The site I have chosen is near a temple where it is said that Nero watched Rome burning. I would like to see the footprints of such a wicked man wiped out by those of holy women. I do not know, Michelangelo, what shape or proportion to give the house. . . ."

"If you would care to descend to the site, *signora*, we could study the ruins."

He had hoped that they could go alone but Vittoria invited the group to accompany them. Michelangelo walked by her side in an emotional cloud. "Marchesa," he said when they reached the site, "I think this broken portico might be converted into a campanile. I shall make you some drawings." The warmth of her gratitude reached out to him like embracing arms. "I did not dare to ask for so much."

"When may I bring the sketches to you?"

"Perhaps in a week or two?"

He returned to his studio in a fury. What kind of game was this woman playing? Shunting him off for another two weeks! Was she paying him compliments merely to bring him to her feet? Could she not tell how completely he was taken by her?

"She is dedicated to the memory of her husband," Tommaso told Michelangelo. "Since his death, she has loved only Jesus."

"If the love of Christ prevented a woman from loving mortal man, the Italian people would have died out long ago."

"I have brought you some of her poems. Perhaps you will learn more about her from them."

When Tommaso had departed, Michelangelo read from a poem written to her husband:

Thou knowest, Love, I never sought to flee
From thy sweet prison, nor impatient threw
Thy dear yoke from my neck

He was puzzled. Why had Vittoria described her love as a prison, a yoke? He had to have the answer: for he knew now that he loved her.

"There are ways of getting information," Leo Baglioni assured him, "particularly among the Neapolitans in Rome who fought alongside the marchese."



Last Judgment Sistine Chapel

Five days later, he came to the studio. "This was no lyrical love affair," he said. "The marchese never loved his wife, and fled from her a few days after the wedding. He wenched the whole way from Naples to Milan. He used every excuse known to inventive husbands never to be in the same city with her. Further, he committed one of the most dastardly double treasons in history, betraying both his Emperor and his fellow conspirators. He died by poison, a long way from a battlefield."

Into Michelangelo's mind there flashed the thought: "That is why she refuses to love again. Not because the first love was so beautiful, but because it was ugly!" Then he sensed something else. "Her husband never consummated that marriage. She is as virginal as the young girls in her nunneries."

He ached with compassion for her. He would have to persuade this desirable woman that he had a love to offer that could be as beautiful as the one she had invented.

THE OVER-ALL design for the Sistine wall was now complete: a tumultuous horde of human beings surrounding Christ in inner intimate circles and outer remote ones; vertical shafts of bodies rising upward on one side, descending on the other. On the bottom to the left was the yawning cave of hell.

The Last Day had been said to coincide with the end of the world. But could that be? Could God have created the world only to abandon it? Would not God sustain the world for ever in spite of wickedness and evil? Since every man judged himself before death, could not the Last Judgment be man's agonizing appraisal of himself—with no evasions, deceits? Each individual was responsible for his conduct on earth; there was a judge within, an awful suffering.

By the autumn his cartoon was ready to be blown up to wall size. Pope Paul, wishing to give him security, issued a breve which declared Michelangelo Buonarroti to be the Sculptor, Painter and Architect of the Vatican, with a lifetime pension of a hundred ducats a month. This caused a breach between Michelangelo and the architect Antonio da Sangallo which would last for many years.

Antonio had been Bramante's apprentice and was part of the Bramante-Raphael clique that had always been hostile to Michelangelo. His supremacy as architect of St. Peter's and of Rome had not been challenged for fifteen years; but Michelangelo was aghast at the bad taste with which he was cluttering Bramante's design. The Pope's breve infuriated Sangallo. He appeared one night at Michelangelo's house, his fists clenched. "Get your bashed-in nose out of St. Peter's," he cried. "You've meddled in other people's affairs all your life. If you value your life: *St. Peter's is mine!*"

Michelangelo replied coldly: "I am only concerned that St. Peter's remain pure, serene, spiritual, as in Bramante's plan."

By day he locked himself in with his Last Judgment, with only Urbino by his side on the high scaffold. At night he read the Bible, Dante, and Savonarola's sermons sent to him by Vittoria Colonna; all fitted together as parts of a whole.

On the outside, it seemed that Judgment Day had arrived for Pope Paul. Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, was travelling north from Naples with the army that had already sacked Rome. Pope Paul had no army. He decided to fight with a display of peace and grandeur. He

received the Emperor on the steps before St. Peter's, surrounded by the hierarchy of the Church in their splendid robes, and three thousand valiant young Romans. Charles graciously accepted the Pope's spiritual authority. The following day he called on Vittoria Colonna, who summoned Michelangelo for the meeting so that he might speak for Florence. The Holy Roman Emperor acknowledged Vittoria's introduction with considerable warmth. Michelangelo pleaded with him for the removal of the tyrant Alessandro. The Emperor said: "I can only promise you that when I go to Florence I shall pay a visit to your new sacristy. I have heard it declared one of the marvels of the world."

"Excellence," Michelangelo went on, risking the Emperor's displeasure, "Florence can continue to create noble works of art only if you rescue her from Alessandro."

Charles said: "If your Medici chapel sculptures are all that I have heard, something shall be done."

Charles V kept his word; he was so deeply stirred by his visit to the new sacristy that he ordered the wedding ceremonies of his daughter Margaret to Alessandro to be held in Michelangelo's chapel. The prospect made Michelangelo ill. But the marriage proved to be short-lived; Alessandro was murdered by a Popolano cousin and Florence was freed of its tyrant. Alessandro's body was dumped into the sarcophagus under Dawn and Dusk. "All Florentines are rid of Alessandro except me," Michelangelo said to Urbino morosely. "Now you see what I am good for: to provide tombs for tyrants."

He was comforted to learn that seventeen-year-old Cosimo de' Medici, a Popolano descendant, was now in the Medici palace in Florence, and that many of the exiles were returning home. But Cosimo, too, soon developed into a tyrant, reducing the newly elected councils to impotence. Civil war broke out again. Hundreds of the finest minds and spirits of Tuscany were executed, including a dozen of the young exiles whom Michelangelo had known in Rome.

"What kind of jungle do we live in," Michelangelo cried, "that such senseless crime can be committed with impunity?"

How right he had been to put up on that wall a terrifying Judgment Day for struggling humanity.

Vittoria Colonna too had come into troubled times. Cardinal Caraffa, a religious fanatic, began his efforts to bring the Inquisition into Italy

to wipe out the heretics who were working to oblige the Church to reform itself. Though the group Michelangelo had heard praising Savonarola numbered no more than eight or nine, Caraffa made it plain that he considered it dangerous. "What will it mean to you if Caraffa gains control?" Michelangelo asked Vittoria anxiously.

"Exile." Michelangelo turned pale. "Should you not be careful?"

"I might issue the same warning to you. Caraffa does not like what you are painting in the Sistine."

"How could he know? I keep it locked."

"The same way that he knows what we say here."

Caraffa was not the only one who knew what he was putting on the wall. A strange letter came from Pietro Aretino, whom Michelangelo knew by reputation as a witty writer and unscrupulous blackmailer, obtaining astounding favours and sums of money, even from princes and cardinals, by threatening to flood Europe with evil letters about them. He was at the moment a man of great importance in Venice.

The purpose of Aretino's first letter was to tell Michelangelo how he should paint the Last Judgment, and he wrote often to ask for drawings, cartoons, models. Michelangelo answered evasively, then grew bored and ignored Aretino completely. It was an error: Aretino saved his venom until the Last Judgment was completed, then struck.

NOW TIME and space became identical. Each morning Urbino laid the field of *intonaco*; by nightfall Michelangelo had filled it with a body tumbling towards hell. At noon a woman servant brought food which Urbino reheated on a brazier on the scaffold. During the winter nights he made drawings for Vittoria: a Holy Family, a Pietà; while she presented him with a first copy of her published poems, *Rime*. For Michelangelo, desiring to pour out the whole of his passion, it was an incomplete relationship, yet his love for her, and his conviction that she felt deeply for him, kept his creative powers at the flood.

By the end of 1540, when Michelangelo had completed the upper two-thirds of the fresco, Pope Paul arrived at the locked Sistine door unannounced. Urbino could not refuse to admit him. Michelangelo came down from the scaffold and greeted Pope Paul and his Master of Ceremonies, Biagio da Cesena, cordially. The Pope stood facing the Last Judgment, walked towards the wall, and when he reached the

altar sank to his knees and prayed. He rose with tears on his cheeks, made the sign of the Cross over Michelangelo and then the Last Judgment. "My son, you have created a glory for my reign."

But Biagio had been glaring at the fresco. *"Scandaloso!"* he spat out. "Totally immoral! I cannot tell the saints from the sinners. There are hundreds of nudes! In the Pope's chapel! Shameful!"

"On Judgment Day we shall all stand naked before the Lord," replied Paul. "My son, how do I express my gratitude?"

Biagio said: "One day this sacrilegious wall will be annihilated."

"I will excommunicate anyone who dares touch this masterpiece!" cried Pope Paul.

They left the chapel. Michelangelo asked Urbino to lay some *intonaco* on the blank spot on the lower right-hand corner of the wall. There, he painted a caricature of Biagio da Cesena, representing him as the judge of the shades of Hades, with the ears of an ass, and a monstrous snake coiled round the lower part of the torso: a lethal likeness, the pointed nose, lips drawn back over buck-teeth.

Word soon leaked out and Biagio da Cesena demanded a second meeting before the fresco. "You see, Holy Father," he cried. "The report was true. Buonarroti has painted me with a repulsive serpent."

"It's a covering," replied Michelangelo. "I knew you would not want to be portrayed naked."

"A remarkable likeness," observed the Pope, his eyes twinkling. "Michelangelo, I thought you said you could not do portraiture?"

"I was inspired, Holiness."

Biagio hopped up and down as though he were standing over the fires of hell. "Holiness, make him take me out of there!"

"Out of hell?" The Pope turned surprised eyes on the man. "Had he placed you in purgatory, I should have done everything in my power to release you. But from hell there is no redemption."

Vittoria Colonna sent a message that she was about to be driven into exile by Cardinal Caraffa. Could Michelangelo come at once? She wished to say farewell. It was an intoxicating April day, the buds bursting forth in the Colonna gardens, the wild scents of spring enclosed within the walls. The garden was full of people. She greeted him with a sombre smile, a black mantilla over her golden hair. "It was good of you to come, Michelangelo."

"Let us not waste time on formalities. Where are you going?"

"To Viterbo, to the Convent of St. Catherine."

They stood in silence, probing deep into each other's eyes.

"I'm sorry that I shall not see your Last Judgment."

"You will see it. When do you leave?"

"In the morning. You will write to me?"

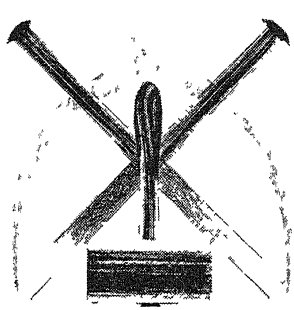
"I will write, and send you drawings."

"I will answer, and send you poems."

He turned abruptly and left the garden; locked himself in his studio, bereft. It was dark by the time he roused himself from his torpor and asked Urbino to light his way to the Sistine.

In the flickering half-world of the chapel the Last Judgment sprang cyclonically to life. Judgment Day became Judgment Night. The three hundred men, women, children, saints, angels and demons, many of whom had been submerged in the full light of day, pressed forward to be recognized and to play out their portentous drama. Then, looking up to the vault, he saw his frescoes of God creating the universe. Lines from the Bible came into his mind: *And God saw all that he had made, and found it very good.* Michelangelo turned back to his painting on the altar wall. He saw all that he had made, and found it good.

BOOK ELEVEN
The Dome



On All Saints' Eve, exactly twenty-nine years after Pope Julius had consecrated the Sistine ceiling, Pope Paul said High Mass to celebrate the completion of the Last Judgment.

On Christmas Day, 1541, the chapel was thrown open to the public. Rome streamed through the Sistine, terrified, shocked, awe-stricken. The studio in the Macello dei Corvi was thronged with Florentines, cardinals, artists and apprentices. When the last of the guests had disappeared Michelangelo realized that two groups had not been represented: Antonio da Sangallo and the artists and architects who centred

round him; and Cardinal Caraffa and his followers. Very soon war was declared. An unfrocked monk, Bernardino Ochino, censured Pope Paul by demanding: "How can Your Holiness allow such an obscene painting to remain in a chapel where the divine office is sung?"

But the Pope was firm in his support; he asked Michelangelo to fresco two large walls of a chapel named after him, the Pauline. He wanted a Conversion of Paul on one wall, a Crucifixion of Peter on the other.

Though he had the constant companionship of Tommaso, who was now one of his chief assistants, Michelangelo sorely missed Vittoria. He wrote her long letters, frequently sending a sonnet or a drawing, but she answered less and less frequently. To his anguished cry of "Why?" she replied: *If you and I were to go on writing without intermission, according to my obligation and your courtesy, I should have to neglect the chapel of St. Catherine here . . . while you would have to leave the chapel of St. Paul. . . . Thus we should both of us fail in our duty.*

He felt crushed, chagrined, as though he were a small boy who had been reproved. He was depleted and tired; he spent his days with hammer and chisel while thinking through the imagery of St. Paul's conversion. He completed the figures for Pope Julius's tomb, added a Virgin, Prophet and Sibyl to be carved from his sketches by Raffaelo da Montelupo, who had carved a statue for his Medici chapel.

Cardinal Caraffa's burning zeal for the dogma of the Church was making him the most feared and influential leader of the College of Cardinals, and when Vittoria Colonna returned to Rome to enter the Convent of San Silvestro Michelangelo feared for her safety. He pressed for a meeting. Vittoria refused. He accused her of cruelty; she replied that it was a kindness. Finally, he gained her assent, only to find that illness and the pressure of the accusations against her had aged her twenty years. He found her sitting alone in the convent garden. He was overcome. "I tried to save you from this," she said.

"You think my love so shallow?"

"Even in your kindness there is a cruel revelation."

"Life is cruel, never love."

"Love is the cruellest of all. I know . . ." Vittoria said.

"You know only a fragment," he interrupted. "Why have you kept us apart? And why have you returned to such danger?"

"I must make my peace with the Church, find forgiveness for my

sins. I have indulged my own vain opinions against the divine doctrine, harboured dissenters. My last desire is to die in the state of grace."

"Your illness has done this to you," he cried. "The Inquisition has tortured you."

"I have tortured myself. Michelangelo, I worship you as God-given among men. But you too will have to seek salvation."

He listened to the noise of the bees as they buzzed in the cups of the flowers. His heart ached for her despair. He said: "My feelings for you, which you would never allow me to express, have not changed. Did you think I was a young boy who had fallen in love with a pretty *contadina?* Do you know how great a place you occupy in my mind?"

Tears flooded her eyes. "Thank you, *caro*," she whispered. "You have healed wounds that go very far back." Then she was gone.

WHEN Antonio da Sangallo began pouring foundations for the ring of chapels on the south side of the tribune of St. Peter's, his long-smouldering feud with Michelangelo became full-blown. According to Michelangelo's measurements, building the corresponding wing to the north would necessitate tearing down the Pauline chapel and part of the Sistine. "I simply cannot believe my eyes," cried Pope Paul when Michelangelo drew him a plan of what was going on. "How much of the Sistine would his chapels replace?"

"Approximately the area covered by the Deluge, Noah, the Delphic Sibyl and Zacharias. God would survive."

"How fortunate for Him," murmured Paul.

The Pope suspended work on St. Peter's on the grounds that there was insufficient money to continue. But Sangallo knew that Michelangelo was the cause. He made his assistant begin an attack on the Last Judgment, saying it gave comfort to the enemies of the Church and caused converts to Luther. Yet travellers coming into the Sistine fell on their knees before the fresco, even as Paul III had, repenting.

Then a letter arrived from Aretino. It began with an attack on the Last Judgment, then went on to call Michelangelo a fraud and a thief for having taken "the heaps of gold which Pope Julius bequeathed you," and given the Roveres nothing in return. Michelangelo then read: *It would certainly have been well if you had fulfilled your promise with due care, had it been only to silence the evil tongues who*

assert that only a Tommaso knows how to allure favours from you!

Michelangelo was swept by a cold chill. What evil tongues? What favours? He began to feel ill. In his seventy years he had been accused of many things, of being cantankerous, arrogant, snobbishly unwilling to associate with any but those who had the greatest talent and intellect. But never had such an insinuation been made as this one. Tommaso de' Cavalieri was as noble a soul as there was in Italy! For fifty-odd years, Michelangelo had taken apprentices and assistants into his home; at least thirty young men had lived and worked with him in this traditional relationship. Never in these associations had there been a word breathed against the propriety of his conduct. This false imputation seemed as devastating a blow as he had received in all his stormy years.

It did not take long for Aretino's poison to seep into Rome. A few days later Tommaso arrived, his face pale.

"I heard last night," he said, "about Aretino's letter."

"I'm sorry, Tommaso," Michelangelo said hoarsely. "I never meant to cause you embarrassment."

"It is you I am worried about, Michelangelo. My family and companions will scoff at this canard and ignore it. But you, my dear friend, are revered all over Europe. It is you that Aretino means to hurt. The last thing in the world I want is to hurt you."

"You could never hurt me, Tommaso. With Marchesa Vittoria ill, yours is the only love I can count on to sustain me. I will ignore Aretino, as one should all blackmailers. Let us continue with our lives and our work. That is the proper answer to scandalmongers."

HE WAS putting the final touches on the last of his sketches for the wall of the Pauline chapel when news came that Antonio da Sangallo had died of malaria. Pope Paul gave Sangallo a spectacular funeral. In church, Michelangelo stood with Tommaso and Urbino listening to the eulogizing of Sangallo as one of the greatest architects since the ancients who had built Rome. Walking home, Michelangelo commented: "That eulogy is word for word the one I heard for Bramante; yet Pope Leo had stopped all of Bramante's work before he died, just as Pope Paul had halted Sangallo's on St. Peter's. . . ."

Tommaso looked sharply at Michelangelo. "Do you think . . . ?"

"Oh no, Tommaso!"

Michelangelo was summoned to the Vatican. "My son," the Pope said, "I am herewith appointing you architect of St. Peter's."

"Holiness, I cannot assume the post."

There was a twinkle in Paul's discerning eyes.

"Are you going to tell me that architecture is not your trade?"

"Holy Father, I have the Pauline chapel to complete. I am over seventy. Where will I find the force to build the mightiest church in Christendom? I am not Abraham who lived one hundred and seventy-five years. . . ."

Pope Paul was unaffected. "You are but a youth. When you reach my august age of seventy-eight you will be allowed to speak of your years. By that time St. Peter's will be well on its way."

At sunset Michelangelo went to St. Peter's. The workmen had gone home. He inspected Sangallo's foundations, and realized that many were inadequate and would have to be levelled. His tour of inspection ended as night closed down. Finding himself in front of the chapel where his Pietà now was, he went in and stood in the dark before it. He was torn by conflict. He knew the dimension of the task, the opposition he would meet, the gruelling labour that would make the end of his life harder than any of the years that had gone before.

An old woman came into the chapel, placed a lighted taper before the Madonna. Michelangelo reached into the basket of candles, selected one, lighted it. Of course he must build St. Peter's! Was not life to be worked, and suffered, right to the end? But he refused to be paid for his services as architect. He painted from first light until dinner-time in the Pauline chapel, then walked to St. Peter's to watch the levelling. The disclosure of the weakness of the piers infuriated the superintendent and contractors who had worked under Sangallo. They put so many obstacles in his path that Pope Paul had to issue a decree declaring Michelangelo superintendent as well as architect.

The fabric of the great basilica began to grow with a momentum that amazed Rome. A committee of Roman Conservators, impressed, came to ask if he would rescue the Capitoline hill and the Campidoglio, which had been the seat of religion and government of the Roman Empire. This glorious spot was a shambles, the old temples reduced to rubble.

"Would I?" Michelangelo cried to Tommaso. "You shall help me, Tomao. I know you have always dreamed of rebuilding Rome."

When Michelangelo visited Vittoria at the convent on Sunday afternoons he brought sketches with him, trying to interest her in the works he had projected; but she came alive only when he spoke of the dome for St. Peter's. She knew of his abiding love for the domed Pantheon, and the Duomo of Florence. "It is pure sculpture," he often said.

"And what of St. Peter's dome? Will that be only a top to keep out the rain?"

"Vittoria, it is good to see you smile, and to hear you tease me."

"You must not think me unhappy, Michelangelo. I await with trembling joy my reunion with God."

"*Cara*, why are you so eager to die, when there are those of us who love you dearly? Is it not selfish of you?"

She took his hand: he could feel her sharp bones. Her eyes burnt as she whispered: "Forgive me for failing you. I can forgive myself only because I know you have no real need of me. You created majestically before you met me, and you will create majestically after I am gone."

Before there was time for another Sunday meeting he was summoned to the palace of a cousin of Vittoria's where she had been moved. The doctor met him at the gate. "She will not see the sunrise," he said.

He paced the garden while the heavens moved in their cycle. At the seventeenth hour she died. He was admitted to the palace. In death Vittoria's expression was one of sublimity. She looked as young and beautiful as the first time he had met her.

Speaking in a low voice, the Abbess ordered in the coffin. It was coated with tar. Michelangelo cried: "What is the meaning of this tar-covered coffin? The marchesa has not died of the plague?"

"To protect the coffin. We fear reprisals, *signore*," the Abbess murmured. "We must get the marchesa back to the convent and buried before her enemies can claim her body."

Michelangelo trudged wearily homeward, chewing on the bitter herb of irony: the marchese, who had fled his wife would now have her by his side for all eternity. And Michelangelo, who had found Vittoria the crowning love of his life, had never been permitted to fulfil it.

IN THE EYES of the world he was now truly the "Master." Duke Cosimo urged him to return to Florence to create sculptures for the city. The King of France deposited money in a Roman bank against the

day when he would carve or paint for him. The Sultan of Turkey offered to send a party to escort him to Constantinople to work there.

He spent the better part of the day in the Pauline, painting. When he tired, he returned home to pick up hammer and chisel. He was carving a Descent from the Cross for his own tomb. He began to suffer intermittent spells of illness during which he would grow cranky with his friends. When he recovered he would cry to Tommaso: "Why do I behave so cantankerously? Because my seventies are fleeing so fast?"

"Granacci said you were already crusty at twelve."

"Bless his memory." Granacci, his oldest friend, had died; so had Balducci, Leo Baglioni, and his brother Giovansimone. Tommaso de' Cavalieri married the daughter of a noble Roman family, and within a year she presented her husband with a son.

Then Pope Paul died and the people of the city showed genuine grief. The Florentine colony believed it was the turn of Cardinal Niccolò Ridolfi, Contessina's son, to become Pope. He had no enemies in Italy except Duke Cosimo of Florence. During the conclave in the Sistine Chapel, with the election all but settled in favour of Niccolò, he became suddenly and violently ill. By morning he was dead. Michelangelo's doctor performed an autopsy. Afterwards he came to Michelangelo, who looked up with dazed eyes. "Murder?"

"Beyond any doubt. One of Duke Cosimo's agents may have had the opportunity to administer the poison."

Giammaria Ciocchi del Monte became Pope Julius III. His main interest in life was pleasure. He spent money on such a lavish scale that he used up the funds stipulated for St. Peter's. All work was shut down.

ONE DAY Urbino said to Michelangelo: "*Messere*, I do not like to bring you further problems, but I must leave you. Ten years ago I chose a girl in my village. She is eighteen today. It is time for us to marry."

"Bring your wife here. We'll fix up a home for you."

Urbino's eyes were round. "Are you sure, *Messere*? For I am forty now, and I should have children as quickly as possible."

"This is your home. Your sons will be my grandsons."

He gave Urbino two thousand ducats in cash so that he could be independent, then an additional sum to fix up a room for his bride. In a few days Urbino returned with his wife, a sympathetic girl who took

over the management of the household. She gave Michelangelo the affection she would have brought to her husband's father. Nine months later they named their first son Michelangelo. To Michelangelo's delight, his nephew, Lionardo, at last decided to carry on the Buonarroti name. He married Cassandra Ridolfi, and Michelangelo was so delighted that he sent Cassandra two rings, one diamond and the other ruby. They named their first-born son Buonarroto. The next son they named Michelangelo, but he died, and Michelangelo grieved.

Work proceeded on the restoration of the Campidoglio. Michelangelo took the ancient Roman salt-tax office and converted it into a regal palace with lyrical flights of steps rising from either end to a centre entrance. He then planned two palaces, identical in design, for either side of the square. He levelled the piazza, paved it with patterned stones, searched his mind for a work of art for the middle of the square. He thought of the bronze equestrian statue of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius which had stood unharmed in front of St. John in Lateran all through the centuries because Christians believed it to be Constantine, the first Christian emperor. He placed the glorious statue on such a low platform that Marcus Aurelius seemed to have just come down the Senatorial steps and mounted his horse to ride across Rome.

In 1555, Pope Julius III died and was succeeded by Cardinal Cervini, Marcellus II, who died after a three-week reign. Then the disagreeable Cardinal Caraffa became Pope Paul IV. Knowing how much he was hated, he said: "I do not know why they elected me, so I am bound to conclude that it is not the cardinals but God who makes the Popes."

It was his ambition to wipe out heresy in Italy, and his Board of Inquisition tortured and condemned accused people without trial, locked them in dungeons in the cellars, burnt them in the Campo dei Fiori. Michelangelo considered himself fit fuel for the fires, but he made no attempt to flee. Finally Pope Paul IV sent for him, and received him in a small, monastic room with whitewashed walls. His expression was as severe as his robe. "Buonarroti, it is the will of the Council of Trent that heretical frescoes such as your altar will be destroyed."

"The Last Judgment?" He stood staring at the whitewashed wall.

"Many say that you have blasphemed; they are confirmed by an article written by Aretino of Venice. . . ."

"A blackmailer!"

"A friend of Titian, of Charles V, Benvenuto Cellini, the late Francis I of France. . . . Here is one of the copies passing from hand to hand in Rome."

Michelangelo took the paper from the Pope, began to read: *Is it possible that you can have represented in the sacred temple of God . . . in the greatest chapel in the world . . . angels and saints without a remnant of modesty and denuded of all celestial ornament!* He jerked his head up. "Holiness, this attack was written when I refused to send Aretino some of my drawings. It was his way of striking at me."

"Decent people are shocked by the nakedness of saints and martyrs. They find it evil."

"My fresco is not evil. It is permeated with a love of God."

"Very well. I shall not demand that the wall be torn down. I shall have it whitewashed. Then you can paint something over it, something simple and devout."

He was too crushed to fight back. Not so, Rome. His friends, including a number of cardinals led by Ercole Gonzaga, began a campaign to save the wall. The painter Daniele da Volterra, one of Michelangelo's most enthusiastic followers, came to the studio one day. "Master, the Last Judgment is saved. There will be no coat of whitewash."

Michelangelo said: "I must thank every last person who helped me."

"Master," said Daniele, "we have had to pay a price. The Pope agreed not to destroy the wall providing breeches and petticoats were put on everybody's nakedness. All must be clothed from the hips to the knees, particularly those whose bottoms are facing the chapel."

"If in my earlier years I had given myself to make sulphur matches," swore Michelangelo, "I should now suffer less."

"Master, let us try to be sensible. The Pope was going to call in a court painter, but I persuaded him to let me do the job. I will injure the wall as little as possible. Don't be angry with me."

"You are right, Daniele. We must offer up these private parts to the Inquisition. I have spent a lifetime portraying the beauty of man. Now he has become shameful again, to be burnt in a new bonfire of vanities. We are returning to the darkest, most ignorant centuries of the past."

"I will use so thin a paint," said Daniele, "that the next Pope can have all the breeches and robes removed without harming anything."

"Go then, and wrap their winding sheets about them."

SIGISMONDO died in Settignano, the last of his brothers. Equally sad was the final illness of Urbino, who had been with him for twenty-six years. The nobility of Urbino's spirit shone forth when he whispered to Michelangelo: "Even more than dying, it grieves me to leave you alone in this treacherous world."

Urbino's wife, Cornelia, gave birth to her second son at the moment her husband was being buried. Michelangelo was named guardian of the two boys; when their mother left with them for her parents' home, the house seemed desolate. He busied himself by carving a new Pietà; began searching for worthy poor he could help for the salvation of his soul.

The eighties, he decided, were not the most pleasant decade in the span of man. When he left Florence at sixty he had feared that his life might be over; but love had made him young again, and the sixties had flown by. During his seventies he had been so deeply immersed in the Pauline chapel frescoes, his new architectural career, and St. Peter's that no day had been long enough to accomplish his tasks. But now, as he moved towards eighty-two, the hours were like hornets, each stinging as it passed. His step was not as firm as it had been. His stamina was giving way to a series of minor disturbances, sapping his strength, interfering with his drive to create a glorious dome for St. Peter's.

Then he went down with a severe attack of kidney stones. Dr. Colombo pulled him through with the aid of Tommaso's untiring care; but he was confined to his bed for several months and was obliged to turn over the designs for one of the chapels to a new superintendent. When he recovered he found that the new man had misread his plans, making serious errors. He was overcome with remorse; this was his first failure in years of building. He called on the Pope at once; but Baccio Bigio, representing the old Sangallo faction, had been there before him.

"So the chapel will have to be pulled down," Pope Paul said. "I am saddened. How could such a thing happen?"

"I have been ill, Holy Father."

"Bigio claims you are too old to carry such a heavy responsibility. He feels that you should be relieved of the burden."

"His solicitude touches me. He and his associates have been trying to get this 'burden' off my shoulders and into their own hands for years. Can you believe Bigio is better on his good days than I on my bad?"

"No one is questioning your ability."

"Holiness, for thirty years I watched architects futilely pouring foundations for St. Peter's. In the ten years I have been the architect, the church has risen upward like an eagle. If you dismiss me now, it will be the ruin of the edifice."

The Pope's lips twitched. "Michelangelo, as long as you have the strength to fight back, you shall remain the architect of St. Peter's."

That night there was a meeting in the house on the Macello dei Corvi. Because he had so nearly died, Tommaso and a group of his oldest friends insisted that he build a complete model of the dome.

"I have heard you say," Tommaso said, "that you wanted the work to progress so far that no one could change its design after your death."

"That is my hope. But I have not yet conceived the final dome. I shall have to find it. Then we shall build a wooden model." Everyone left. Michelangelo walked to his drawing-table. A dome was not a mere roof. It was a vault of man, created in the image of the vault of heaven. It was the most natural of all architectural forms, and the most celestial.

Some people said the earth was round; for a man like himself whose travels had been limited, that was hard to prove. At school he had been taught that the earth was flat, ending where the dome of heaven came down to its circular boundaries. Yet he had always observed a peculiar phenomenon of that supposedly anchored-down horizon: as he walked or rode to reach it, it receded at an equal pace. Just so, his dome. It must not be finite. A man standing beneath it must feel that he could never reach its boundaries. He wanted his dome to be of a mystical beauty that would reassure man of God's presence. Under it a man's soul must soar upward to God even as it would in the moment of its final release from his body. His mind and fingers were moving with clarity and force.

He started modelling. Over the months he made a dozen models and destroyed them. At last it came, after eleven years of thinking, drawing, praying, experimenting and rejecting: soaring heavenward, constructed of gossamer which carried effortlessly and musically upward its three-hundred-and-thirty-five-foot height.

He hired a carpenter to build the scaled-down model. The giant dome would rest on the piers and on the arches that the piers supported, and on a circular drum. The drum would be built of brick with a sheathing of travertine; the external ribs of the dome would be of travertine, the buttresses held to the drum by a framework of wrought iron. Eight

ramps along the lower drum would afford a means of carrying materials on the donkeys up to the dome walls. The plans took months to draw.

Pope Paul IV died suddenly. Rome burst into the most violent insurrection Michelangelo had yet seen at the death of any pontiff. The crowd knocked down a statue of him, dragged its head through the streets, then threw it into the Tiber before storming the headquarters of the Inquisition to release all prisoners and destroy the documents convicting the accused of heresy.

The College of Cardinals elected sixty-year old Giovanni Angelo Medici, from a Lombardy branch of the Medici family. Pope Pius IV had been trained as a lawyer. He was a brilliant negotiator and a man of integrity. The Inquisition, foreign to the Italian character, was ended. Through a series of conferences and contracts the Pope brought peace to Italy and the surrounding nations, and to the Lutherans. The Church reunited Catholicism in Europe and achieved peace for itself.

Pope Pius IV reconfirmed Michelangelo's position as architect of St. Peter's, provided him with funds to build the dome. He also commissioned him to design a gate for the city walls, to be called Porta Pia.

It was clearly a race against time. He thought it would take ten to twelve years to complete the dome; this would bring him to a round century mark. Nobody lived that long; but despite his attacks of the stone, stomach disorders, backaches, dizziness, he did not feel any diminishing of his power. There was still good colour in his face. His eyes were clear and penetrating. He would get the dome built.

WHILE THE CATHEDRAL structure rose, Michelangelo resumed carving his Pietà. One day while he was working, darkness flooded over him. After a lapse of time he regained consciousness; but he was confused. Had he dropped off to sleep? Why did he feel a numbness and weakness in the left arm and leg? Why did the muscles on one side of his face feel as though they were sagging?

He called his servant. When he asked her to summon Tommaso, he noticed that his speech was slurred. The elderly woman helped him into bed, then put on a shawl to go through the streets. She returned with Tommaso and his doctor, who gave him a warm drink, stirring in a foul-tasting medicine. "Rest cures everything," said the doctor.

"Except old age."

"I've been hearing about your old age too long now to take it seriously," replied Tommaso. "I'll stay here until you sleep."

He awakened to find deep night outside. He lifted himself gingerly. The headache was gone, and he could see clearly the work that was still required on his Pietà. He rose, put a candle in his cap, returned to his carving. It was good to have the feel of marble at his finger-tips.

At dawn Tommaso opened the street door cautiously, burst into laughter. "You rogue! I left you at midnight, deep asleep. I come back a few hours later, and find a snowstorm of marble chips."

"When the white dust cakes inside my nostrils, I breathe the best."

"The doctor says you need rest."

"In the next world, *caro*." He worked all day, had supper with Tommaso, then threw himself on the bed for a few hours of sleep before rising to fix another candle in his cap and begin polishing.

Two days later, as he stood before his marble, he was struck again. He stumbled to the bed. When he awakened the room was full of people. Facing him was his statue, which throbbed with a life all its own. He thought: "Man passes. Only works of art are immortal."

He insisted on sitting in a chair before the fire. Once when he was left alone he slipped a robe over his shoulders and started walking in the rain towards St. Peter's. One of his newer apprentices met him, asked: "Master, do you think it right to be about in such weather?"

He allowed the man to take him home, but the next afternoon he dressed and tried to mount his horse. His legs were too weak.

Rome came to bid him farewell. Those who could not be admitted left flowers and gifts. The doctor tried to keep him in bed.

"Don't hurry me," he said. "My father lived to his ninetieth birthday, so I still have two weeks to enjoy life."

"To celebrate your ninetieth birthday," said Tommaso, "they're going to start the first ring of the dome."

"*Grazie a Dio.* No one will ever be able to change it now. But all the same, it's sad to have to die."

That night, as he lay sleepless in bed, he thought, "Life has been good. God did not create me to abandon me. I have loved marble, yes, and paint too. I have loved architecture, and poetry, too. I have loved my family and my friends. I have loved God, the forms of the earth and the heavens, and people too. I have loved life to the full, and now I love

death as its natural termination. *Il Magnifico* would be happy: for me, the forces of destruction never overcame creativity."

He was swept by a massive wave of darkness. When he next opened his eyes Tommaso was sitting on the edge of the bed. He put an arm under Michelangelo and raised him up. "Tomao. . . ."

"I am here, *caro.*"

"I want to be buried in Santa Croce with my family."

"The Pope wants you buried in your own church, St. Peter's."

"It is not . . . home. Promise you will take me back to Florence." His strength was ebbing. "I commit my soul into the hands of God, my body to the earth, and my substance to my family . . ."

"It will all be done. I shall finish the Campidoglio, exactly as you planned. With St. Peter's at one end, and the Capitol at the other, Rome will for evermore be Michelangelo's."

"Thank you, Tommaso. . . . I am tired. . . ."

Tommaso kissed Michelangelo on the brow, withdrew weeping.

Dusk was falling. Alone, Michelangelo began to review the images of all the beautiful works he had created. He saw them, one by one, as clearly as the day he had made them, the sculptures, paintings and architecture succeeding each other as swiftly as had the years of his life:

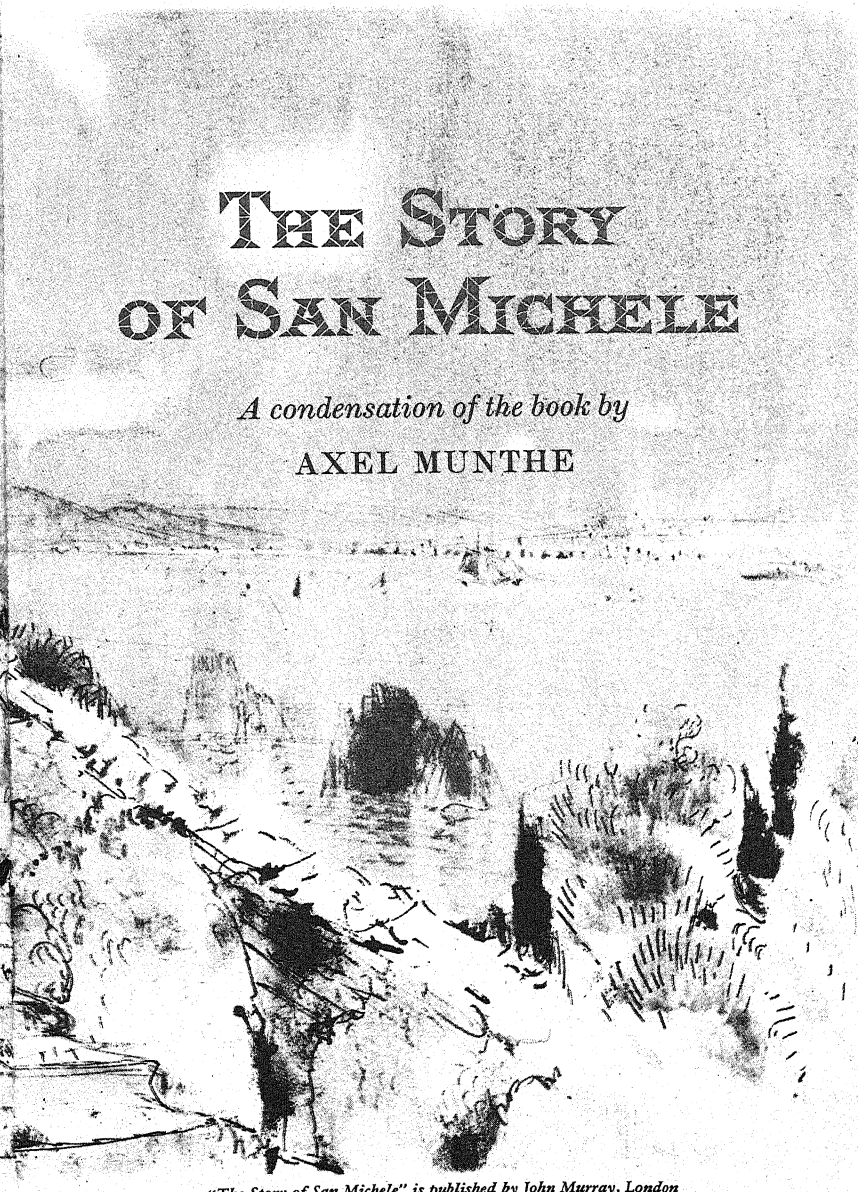
The Madonna of the Stairs and the Battle of the Centaurs he had carved for Bertoldo and *Il Magnifico;* St. Proculus and St. Petronius that he had made for Aldovrandi in Bologna; the wooden Crucifix for Prior Bichiellini; the Sleeping Cupid with which he had tried to fool the dealer in Rome; the Bacchus he had carved in Jacopo Galli's orchard; the Pietà for St. Peter's; the Giant David; the Holy Family teased out of him by Agnolo Doni; the cartoon called The Bathers; the ill-fated bronze statue of Pope Julius II; Genesis on the vault of the Sistine; the Last Judgment to complete the chapel; the Moses for Julius's tomb; his four unfinished Captive-Giants in Florence; the Medici chapel; the Paul and Peter for the Pauline chapel; the Campidoglio, Porta Pia, the Pietàs sculptured for his own pleasure . . . and, as the pictures came to a stop in his mind's eye, St. Peter's. He entered the church through its front portal, walked in the Roman sunshine down the wide nave, stood below the centre of the dome, just over the tomb of St. Peter. He felt his soul leave his body, rise upward into the dome, becoming part of it: part of space, of time, of heaven and of God.



The Story of San Michele

A condensation of the book by

AXEL MUNTHE



Illustrations by Fritz Busse

"The Story of San Michele" is published by John Murray, London

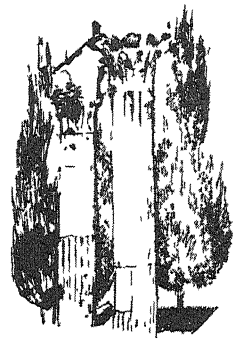
THE YOUNG Axel Munthe stood on the highest point of Anacapri, amidst the ruins of the little chapel of San Michele. The sky was sapphire-blue and across the water he could see the white line of Naples, dwarfed by Vesuvius. There was light everywhere and a peace such as he had never experienced before. "On this very spot," he vowed, "I will build, some day, the house of my dreams"

This is more than the story of how a youthful ambition came true; it is the immortal record of a doctor's lifelong efforts to understand and alleviate human suffering. Munthe's travels and experiences are legendary; so, too, are his acts of mercy in a Naples stricken by cholera, and Messina, devastated by earthquake. The fees from his affluent, and often neurotic, patients enabled him not only to tend the poor but also to buy rare art treasures for the magnificent house he was building. It became the cornerstone of his life, a retreat for the famous and a haven for the birds and animals he loved so dearly.

The Story of San Michele has been published in thirty languages. The English edition alone has sold nearly three-quarters of a million copies. Vividly written, with warmth, humour and compassion, it is a truly great and beloved classic of our time that we are proud to re-present.

"Romantic, realistic, pitiful and enchanting, this is the record of a citadel of the soul . . . a treasure-house of incidents and dreams."

—*The Daily Telegraph*



CAPRI: 1875

I SPRANG from the Sorrento sailing boat on to the little beach. Swarms of boys were playing about among the upturned boats or bathing their shining bronze bodies in the surf, and old fishermen in red Phrygian caps sat mending their nets outside their boat-houses. Opposite the landing-place stood half a dozen donkeys with bunches of flowers in their bridles, and round them chattered and sang as many girls with the silver *spadella* stuck through their black tresses and a red handkerchief tied across their shoulders.

The little donkey who was to take me to Capri was called Rosina, and the name of the girl was Gioia. Her black eyes sparkled, her lips were red like the string of corals round her neck, her strong white teeth glistened like a row of pearls in her merry laughter. She said she was fifteen, but Rosina was old *"è antica."* So I slipped off the saddle and climbed the winding path to the village.

In front of me danced Gioia on naked feet, a wreath of flowers round her head, and behind me staggered old Rosina in her dainty black shoes, with bent head and drooping ears, deep in thought. I had no time to think; my heart was full of the joy of life, the world was beautiful and I was eighteen. We wound our way through *ginestra* and myrtle in full bloom and Gioia picked a bunch of the fragrant flowers for San Costanzo, the patron saint of Capri who was all of solid silver

and had done many miracles. Her father was away coral fishing in "Barbaria," as they call the coast of Tunis and Tripoli. Look at the beautiful string of coral he had sent her. *"Bella! Bella!"*

"And you also are *bella,* Gioia, *bella, bella!*"

"Yes," said she.

I stumbled against a broken column of marble. *"Roba di Tiberio!"* —Tiberius's property—explained Gioia. "Wicked Tiberio, Tiberio with the evil eye, Tiberio the criminal!" She spat on the marble.

The Roman Emperor Tiberius who lived the last eleven years of his life on the island of Capri is still very much alive on the lips of its inhabitants, who believe the scandalous gossip of the historians Suetonius and Tacitus, as I did then.

We reached the piazza where a couple of sailors were standing by the parapet overlooking the Marina, a few drowsy villagers seated in front of the inn, and half a dozen priests on the steps of the church. Towering over the friendly little village the sombre outline of Monte Solaro stood out against the western sky with its stern crags and cliffs. "I want to climb that mountain," said I.

But Gioia did not like the idea. Seven hundred and seventy-seven steps led up the flank of the mountain; and half-way up in a dark cave lived a werewolf who ate Christians. On the top of the stairs was Anacapri, but only mountain people lived there, very bad people. Wouldn't I lunch first, under the big palm tree of the inn? No. I had to climb the mountain at once. *"Addio,* Gioia *bella!"*

"He is a mad Englishman," were the last words I heard from Gioia's red lips as, driven by my fate, I sprang up the steps to Anacapri. Halfway up I overtook an old woman with a basket full of oranges on her head. On top of the oranges lay a bundle of newspapers and letters tied up in a red handkerchief. It was the letter carrier, old Maria Porta-Lettere, who carried the post twice a week to Anacapri, and who became my lifelong friend—I saw her die at the age of ninety-five.

Maria put down her basket, fumbled among the letters, selected the biggest envelope and begged me to tell her if it was not for Nannina the goat woman, who was expecting a letter from her husband in America. No, it was for Signor Ulisse Desiderio. "I think they mean Lemonhead," said Maria, "he had a letter just like this a month ago." But was there no letter for Peppinella-who-lives-above-the-cemetery

or for Mariucella Carrot-top who were also expecting letters from America? No, I was sorry. The newspaper was for the *parroco,* Don Antonio. The parish priest was a learned man, she said. He always found out who the letters were for, but today he was away. I asked if there was an inn in Anacapri? No, but Annarella, the wife of the sacristan, could supply me with goat cheese and a glass of wine. Or there was La Bella Margherita, whose aunt had married an English lord; she could give me lunch.

We reached at last the top of the seven hundred and seventy-seven steps built by the Phoenicians, not Tiberius, and passed through a vaulted gate with the huge iron hinges of its former drawbridge still fastened to the rock. We were in Anacapri. The Bay of Naples lay at our feet, with the glittering white line of Naples, Vesuvius with its rosy cloud of smoke, the Sorrento plain, and farther away the Apennine Mountains, still covered with snow. Just over our heads, riveted to the steep rock like an eagle's nest, stood a little ruined chapel. Its vaulted roof had fallen in, but huge blocks of masonry still supported its crumbling walls. *"Roba di Tiberio,"* said Maria.

"What is the name of the chapel?" I asked eagerly.

"San Michele."

"San Michele, San Michele!" echoed in my heart. In the vineyard below the chapel stood an old man digging furrows for the new vines. "Good day, Mastro Vincenzo!" Maria said. The vineyard was his and so was the little house close by; he had built it all with his own hands, mostly with stones and bricks of the *Roba di Tiberio* that was strewn all over the garden. I looked at the little house and the chapel. My heart began to beat so violently that I could hardly speak.

"I must climb there at once," said I to Maria Porta-Lettere. But old Maria said I should eat first. We walked through empty lanes to a piazzetta. "Here is La Bella Margherita!" La Bella Margherita put a flask of wine and bunch of flowers on the table in her garden. She was fair, the modelling of her face exquisite. She put an enormous plate of macaroni before me. *"Vino del parroco,"* the parish priest's wine, she announced proudly, as she filled my glass. The sky overhead was blue like a sapphire. The *parroco's* wine was red like a ruby, La Bella Margherita sat by my side with golden hair and smiling lips. But "San Michele!" rang through my ears and echoed deep in my heart.

"*Addio,* Bella Margherita!"

"Come back soon," she said.

I walked back through the empty lanes. It was the hour of the siesta; the piazza, ablaze with sun, was deserted. Farther down the lane stood a stately Roman matron. It was Annarella, beckoning me to come in. Why had I gone to La Bella Margherita instead of to her? Everybody knew that the *parroco's* wine was no match for that of her uncle, the Reverend Don Dionisio. Gioconda, her smiling daughter, helped me to a glass of white wine like liquid sunshine. It tasted like nectar.

"Don Dionisio is a very learned man," said Annarella. He had even been to Rome to kiss the hand of the Pope. Had she been to Rome? No. She had been to Capri once, on her wedding day. Capri was full of bad people. I told Annarella I knew all about Capri's patron saint, how many miracles he had done and how beautiful he was, all of solid silver. There was an uncomfortable silence.

"Yes, they say their San Costanzo is of solid silver." Annarella shrugged. "But who knows?" As to his miracles, you could count them on your fingers, while Sant'Antonio, the patron saint of Anacapri had done over a hundred. I hoped with all my heart for a new miracle of Sant'Antonio to bring me back soon to his enchanting village. Kind Annarella's confidence in his power was so great that she refused my money. "You will pay me another time," she said. "Come back soon. Sant'Antonio bless you."

At San Michele, Mastro Vincenzo was still working in his vineyard. Now and then he picked up a slab of coloured marble and threw it over the wall. *"Roba di Tiberio,"* said he. I sat down on a broken column of red granite. At my feet a chicken was scratching in the earth and before my very nose appeared a coin. I picked it up and recognized the noble head of the Emperor Augustus. Mastro Vincenzo said it was not worth a halfpenny; I have it still.

Vincenzo had made the garden and planted the vines and fig trees. Hard work, he said, showing me his large, horny hands, for the ground was full of columns, fragments of statues, and he had to dig up and carry away all this rubbish. The columns he had split into garden steps, and he had been able to utilize many of the marbles when he was building his house, and the rest he had thrown over the precipice. Digging for a cistern, he had come upon a large subterranean room, with

red walls painted with lots of stark-naked *cristiani,* dancing like mad people, their hands full of flowers and bunches of grapes. It took him several days to scrape off these paintings and cover the wall with cement. Now Vincenzo was getting old and hardly able to look after his vineyard any more, and his son who lived on the mainland with twelve children and three cows wanted him to sell the house and come and live with him. Again my heart began to beat. Was the chapel also his? No, it belonged to nobody. It was haunted. When Tiberio had his palace there, he had put Jesus Christ to death, and since then his damned soul, in the shape of a big black snake, came back to ask forgiveness from the monks who were buried under the floor in the chapel.

I climbed over the wall and walked up to the chapel. The floor was covered to a man's height with the debris of the fallen vault, and hundreds of lizards played about, stopping now and then to look at me with lustrous eyes and panting breasts. An owl rose on noiseless wings from a dark corner, and a large snake, asleep on the sunlit mosaic floor of the terrace, slowly unfolded his black coils and glided back into the chapel with a warning hiss at the intruder. Was the sombre old Emperor indeed haunting the ruins where his villa once stood?

I looked down at the beautiful island at my feet. How could he live in such a place and be so cruel! thought I. How could his soul be so dark with such a glorious light on Heaven and Earth! To live in such a place, to die in such a place, if ever death could conquer the everlasting joy of such a life! What daring dream had made my heart beat so violently a moment ago when Mastro Vincenzo had told me that his son wanted him to sell the house, and that the chapel belonged to nobody? Why not to me? Why should I not buy Mastro Vincenzo's house, and join the chapel and the house with garlands of vines and avenues of cypress and columns supporting white loggias, peopled with marble statues. . . . I closed my eyes, lest the beautiful vision should vanish, and gradually reality faded away.

A tall figure wrapped in a rich mantle stood by my side. "It shall all be yours," he said. "The chapel, the house, the mountain with its castle—if you are willing to pay the price!"

"Who are you?"

"I am the immortal spirit of this place. Two thousand years ago I stood here by the side of another man, an Emperor. He only asked for

forgetfulness and peace on this lonely island. I told him the price he would have to pay: the branding of an untarnished name with infamy through all ages. He accepted; he paid the price."

"What is the price you ask of me?"

"The renunciation of your ambition to make a name in your profession. And before you die, you will have to pay another price as well." He laid his hand on my shoulder; I felt a shiver run through my body, but I said, "I will pay the price. I want my house open to sun and wind and the voice of the sea, and light, light everywhere!"

"Beware of the light! Beware of the light!"

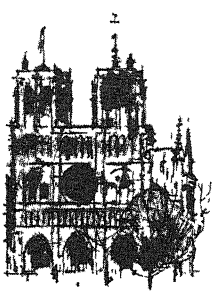
"I want the chapel turned into a library with cloister stalls round the walls and bells ringing Ave Maria over each happy day. And here where we stand on this beautiful island rising like a sphinx from the sea I want a granite sphinx from the land of the Pharaohs."

"You stand upon the site of one of Tiberius's villas. Treasures lie buried here. The Emperor's foot trod upon the marble you saw Vincenzo throw over the wall. And on a lonely plain stood once the villa of another Emperor, who brought a sphinx from the banks of the Nile. Deep in the earth she still lies. Search and you will find her."

"You seem to know the future as well as the past."

"The past and the future are the same." As he spoke, the church bells from Capri began to ring Ave Maria, and he was gone.

Quartier Latin and Avenue de Villiers



I WAS back in Paris, in the Latin Quarter. A student's room. Piles of books on tables, chairs, and in heaps on the floor, and on the wall a faded photograph of Capri. Mornings in the wards of hospitals, going from bed to bed to read chapter after chapter in the book of human suffering, written with blood and tears. Afternoons in the dissecting-rooms and amphitheatres of the School of Medicine or in the laboratories of the Institut Pasteur, watching in the microscope infinitely small beings, arbiters of the life and death of man. Nights of toil to master the classical signs of disorder and disease. Work, work, work!

Summer holidays with empty cafés, School of Medicine closed, the laboratories and amphitheatres deserted, clinics half empty. But no holiday for suffering and death in the hospital wards. No distraction for me but an occasional stroll under the lime trees of the Luxembourg Gardens, or a greedily enjoyed hour of leisure in the Louvre Museum. No friends. No dog. Not even a mistress, though there was a girl smilingly strolling down the Boulevard St. Michel on the arm of almost every student.

They could afford to take it easy, these comrades of mine. Their subtle Latin brains were far quicker than my Northern one and they had no faded photograph of Capri on the wall of their garret to spur them on.

Often during the long nights, as I sat with my head bent over Charcot's *Diseases of the Nervous System,* a terrible thought flashed through my brain: Mastro Vincenzo is old, if he should die or sell to somebody else the little house on the cliff—my heart stood almost still with fear. Rubbing my aching eyes, I plunged into my book again with frantic fury, like a racehorse spurred on towards his goal with bleeding flanks.

Yes, it became a race. My comrades began to bet on me as an easy winner, and even the Master, with his sarcastic voice and cold eyes which could flash in anger like lightning, mistook me for a rising man —the only error of diagnosis I ever knew Professor Charcot to commit.

The most celebrated doctor of his time, Charcot was almost uncanny in the way he went straight to the root of the evil, often after only a rapid glance at the patient. People from all over the world flocked to his consulting-room. He had few friends among his colleagues; he was feared by his patients, to whose suffering he was indifferent, and by his assistants, for whom he seldom had a kind word in exchange for the superhuman amount of work he imposed upon them. But he ruled supreme over the whole faculty of medicine.

Spurred by ambition, I strained every fibre of mind and body to breaking point. From morning till night my lungs were filled with the foul air of the hospital wards, from night till morning with the smoke of endless cigarettes in my stuffy room. Exam after exam in rapid succession; far too rapid, alas, to be of any value. I was to take my degree in the spring. I had learned the structure of the marvellous

machine which is the human body, the harmonious working of its cogs and wheels in health, its disorders in disease, its final breaking down in death. I had learned to fight on more equal terms the implacable Foe, who, scythe in hand, wandered His rounds in the wards. In fact He seemed to have taken up His abode for good in the grim old hospital, which for centuries had sheltered so much suffering.

Sometimes He throttled a victim with a slow grip; sometimes He came on tiptoe, closing with a gentle touch the eyes of another sufferer, who lay there almost smiling after He had gone. Often I did not even know He was coming. And sometimes one of the old nuns, who had spent a lifetime in the wards, saw Him coming just in time to put a crucifix on the bed. At first, when He stood there, victorious, on one side of the bed and I, helpless, on the other, I felt that my mission was at an end when His had begun, and I used to turn my face away in resentment at my defeat. But I began to realize that He had His mission to fulfil just as I had mine. What could He not teach me if I could read His sombre face! He who alone had read the last missing chapter in my medical handbooks!

How could He take away so much of youth and life with one hand, when He could give so much peace and happiness with the other? Why was the grip of His hand round the throat of one of His victims so slow and the blow He dealt to another so swift? Was it His mission to punish as well as to slay? And should I be an impassive spectator of the last unequal battle? Was I to turn away from eyes which implored my help, long after the power of speech had gone? He had His eternal sleeping draught but I had also mine, entrusted to me by benevolent Mother Nature. When He was slow in dealing out His remedy, why should not I deal out mine, change anguish into peace, agony into sleep? Was it not my mission to help those to die I could not help to live? But the old nuns told me that I was committing a terrible sin when I came with my morphine syringe after the old padre had left the bed with his Last Sacrament, that the more suffering God inflicted at the hour of death, the more forgiving would He be on the Day of Judgment.

They were still there in their big white cornets, in all the hospitals of Paris, the gentle, all-sacrificing Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul. Young and old, they were invariably cheerful and full of childish fun and laughter, and it was wonderful the way they knew how to communicate

their happiness to others. They were also tolerant. Those who believed and those who did not were all the same to them, and to me they were wonderfully kind. At first the Mother Superior had made some timid attempts to convert me to the faith, but she had given it up with a compassionate shaking of her old head. Even the dear old padre lost all hope of my salvation when I told him I refused to believe in hell. He was a saint and we soon abandoned these controversial questions. It was he who made me behold the wonderful features of St. Francis of Assisi, friend of all humble and forlorn creatures, who was to become my lifelong friend. And it was Soeur Philomène, so young and fair in her white novice's robe, who taught me to love her Madonna, whose features she wore.

There came days when I sat before my books with no courage left to face a new day, when everything seemed black and hopeless and Capri far away. Then I used to throw myself on the bed and close my aching eyes; soon Sant'Antonio set to work to perform another miracle and I was sailing away from all my worries to the enchanting island. The world was beautiful and I was young, ready to fight, sure to win. I sat down again at my table, book in hand.

When spring dropped the first twig of chestnut flowers on my balcony, I went up for my exam and became the youngest M.D. ever created in France. . . .

DR. MUNTHE. *Avenue de Villiers. Hours: 2–3 p.m.*

Urgent letters, door-bell ringing and messages day and night; the telephone, that deadly weapon in the hands of idle women, had not yet started on its nerve-racking campaign. The consultation-room filled up with patients, mostly nervous cases. Many were seriously ill: I examined them carefully, quite sure I could help them. Many were not ill at all, but they imagined they were. These had the longest tales to tell; they produced from their pockets little papers and began to read out interminable lists of symptoms and complaints. All this was new to me, for in the hospital there was no time for nonsense, and I made many blunders. These patients seemed upset when I told them that their colour was good, but they rallied rapidly when I added that their tongues looked rather bad.

My diagnosis in most cases was over-eating. It was probably the most

correct diagnosis I ever made in those days, but nobody liked it. What they all liked was appendicitis. Appendicitis was then much in demand among people on the look-out for a complaint. All the nervous ladies had got it on the brain if not in the abdomen. They thrived on it, and so did their medical advisers. But when the rumour began to circulate that American surgeons had started on a campaign to cut out every appendix in the United States, my cases of appendicitis began to fall off.

"Take away my appendix!" said the fashionable ladies. "What would I do without it?"

"Take away their appendixes—my appendixes!" said the doctors. "I never heard such nonsense! There's nothing wrong with their appendixes. I know; I examine them twice a week."

A new complaint was discovered to meet the general demand: COLITIS! It was safe from the surgeon's knife, suitable to everybody!

One of my first cases of colitis was a Countess who came to consult me on the recommendation of Charcot. I was of course most anxious to do my very best for her, even had she not been as pretty as she was. She looked at the young oracle with ill-concealed disappointment in her large, languid eyes and said she wished to speak to *"Monsieur le Docteur lui-même,"* the doctor himself, and not to his assistant. She was sure that she had appendicitis and I that she had not. When I told her so she became agitated. Professor Charcot had told her I could help her. . . . She burst into tears. "What is the matter with me?" she sobbed.

"I will tell you if you promise to be calm. Colitis."

She ceased to cry instantly. "Colitis! That is exactly what I thought! Tell me, what is colitis?"

I took good care to avoid that question, for I did not know, nor did anybody else in those days. But I told her it lasted long and was difficult to cure. The Countess smiled. And her husband had said it was nothing but nerves! It was arranged she should come in twice a week. She returned the next day, and even I, who was getting accustomed to sudden changes in my patients, could not help being struck by her cheerful appearance and bright face. She thought I was so clever, she wanted me to have a look at her aunt the Dowager Marquise who was worried about her deafness. The Marquise did not want to see any more doctors, so it was arranged that I meet her unofficially.

A week later I dined at the Countess's house and sat next to the

Marquise, respectfully watching her with my eagle eye while she devoured an enormous plate of *pâté de foie gras* in majestic aloofness. After dinner Monsieur le Comte took me to his study. He was a polite little man, older than his wife, very fat. He said, "I cannot thank you enough for having cured my wife of appendicitis. I confess I had taken a great dislike to doctors, none of them have been able to do my wife any good. But she has great confidence in you, which is a point in your favour."

"It is everything." Then, since I liked so much his frank, polite manners, I asked him whether he and the Countess had a family.

"No," he answered with a slight embarrassment. "I wish to God we had! We have now been married for five years and so far no sign of it. You know, our country seat in Touraine has belonged to us for three centuries, and it appears I am to be the last of my family. It is very hard to accept . . . can nothing be done for these confounded nerves?"

"I am sure this enervating air of Paris is not good for her, why don't you go to Touraine?"

"I love to be there, but it bores the Countess to death. Now she says she must remain in Paris to have her colitis attended to. But do not think her selfish; she is always thinking of me and even wants me to go to the château alone. But how can I leave her alone in Paris? She is so young." He was silent a moment. "Incidentally, a week's rest at the château would do *you* any amount of good. My wife says you are awfully overworked."

"You are very kind, Monsieur le Comte, but there is nothing the matter with me except that I cannot sleep."

"Sleep! I wish I could give you some of mine! I have hardly time to put my head on the pillow before I am fast asleep and nothing can wake me up. By the way, I suppose you do not know of any remedy for snoring?"

It was a clear case. We joined the ladies in the drawing-room. I was made to sit down by the venerable Marquise for the unofficial consultation. I roared into her ear trumpet that she had not got colitis, but that I was sure she would get it if she did not give up her *pâté de foie gras*. She wished to know the symptoms of colitis and smiled while I dripped the subtle poison down the ear trumpet. A week later an elegant coupé stopped in the Avenue de Villiers and a footman rushed upstairs with

a note to come at once to the Marquise who had been taken ill in the night with colitis.

After that, colitis spread like wildfire all over Paris. My waiting-room was soon so full of people that I had to arrange my dining-room as an extra waiting-room.

One day, outside the Marquise's house, I found the Countess standing by my carriage in friendly conversation with my dog Tom, who was sitting on a huge parcel, half hidden under the carriage rug. She was going shopping to buy a birthday present for the Marquise and did not know what to give her. I suggested a dog.

"What a capital idea!" She remembered that her aunt used to have a pug, a pug so fat that he could hardly walk and who snored so terribly that one could hear him all over the house. We walked down the street to a pet shop. There, among half a dozen dogs of all sorts, sat an aristocratic little pug, who snored desperately at us to draw our attention and implored us with his bloodshot eyes to take him away from this mixed society. He nearly suffocated with emotion when he was put into a cab and sent to the Marquise.

The Countess was going on to the Magasins du Louvre to try on a hat. I volunteered to drive her there and she accepted. "What is in that parcel?" she asked with feminine curiosity. Tom, his mission as guardian at an end, jumped to his place by my side; the parcel split and the head of a doll popped out.

"Why on earth do you drive about with dolls?"

"For the children."

She did not know I had any children and seemed offended at my reticence about my private affairs. How many children had I got? About a dozen. "Come and see them," I said. She was delighted.

She did not know where she was as we drove through sombre, evil-smelling slums. Ragged children played in the filthy gutters; before almost every door sat a woman with a baby at her breast and other small children at her side, huddled round a brazier.

"Is this Paris?" The Countess seemed almost frightened.

"Yes, this is Paris, the City of Light." We entered a house in a blind alley, damp and dark as the bottom of a well. Salvatore's wife was sitting on the only chair with Petruccio, her child of sorrow, on her lap, stirring the polenta for dinner, eagerly watched by Petruccio's two



sisters, while the youngest child crawled about the floor in pursuit of a kitten. I told Salvatore's wife I had brought a kind lady who wanted to give the children a present. It was evidently the first time the Countess had ever entered the house of the very poor. She blushed scarlet as she handed a doll to Petruccio's mother, for Petruccio could not hold anything in his withered hand, he had been born paralysed. He showed no sign of being pleased, for his brain was as numb as his limbs, but his mother was sure that he liked the doll very much. His sisters each received a doll and ran away in delight to play at little mothers.

When did I think Salvatore would come out of the hospital? It was now nearly six weeks since he had fallen from the scaffold and broken his leg. I had just seen him at the hospital, he was doing well and would be out soon. How was she getting on with her new landlord? Thank

God, very well, he was kind. Wasn't it nice of him to have opened that little window under the ceiling?

"Look how bright and cheerful it is here now, we are in paradise," said Salvatore's wife. Was it true that I had said to the other landlord, the day he had turned her out in the street and seized all her belongings, that God would punish him for his cruelty to poor people, and that I had cursed him so terribly that he had hanged himself? Yes, it was true and I did not regret what I had done.

As we were going away, my friend Arcangelo Fusco, who shared the room with the Salvatore family, was just returning from his day's work, his street sweeper's broom on his shoulder. He had done me an invaluable service when he had gone with me to the police station to corroborate my evidence concerning the landlord's death. It was a close shave. I was nearly arrested for murder. Arcangelo, who had a rose tucked over his ear, Italian fashion, presented his flower to the Countess, who looked as if she had never received a more graceful tribute.

When I drove her home, she was very silent. On saying good-bye I said that I hoped she was not sorry to have come with me.

"I am not sorry, I am grateful, but . . . I am so ashamed," she sobbed as she sprang in through the gate outside her house.

I often dined at her house on Sunday, a family dinner, only Monsieur l'Abbé and myself. The Abbé was a priest of the old school. He was at first reserved towards me, and when I noticed his shrewd eyes fixed on me I felt as if he knew more about colitis than I did. I felt ashamed before the old man and would have liked to lay my cards on the table.

One day, as I entered my dining-room to snatch a rapid luncheon before beginning my consultations, I was surprised to find him there waiting for me. He said he had come in his quality of an old friend of the Count and Countess.

"You have been remarkably successful with the Countess," he began, "and I must also compliment you about the Marquise. I am astonished to see how much better she is in every way. But it is about the Count that I have come to speak to you. I am greatly worried about him. He spends most of his days here in his room, smoking cigars or asleep in his arm-chair. In the country he is active in managing his estates. His only wish is to go there. If you tell him it is necessary for his health, he will leave Paris."

"I am sorry, Monsieur l'Abbé, but I cannot. The Countess should not leave Paris now."

"Why cannot she be treated for her colitis in the country? There is a very good doctor there."

"I could cure the Countess of colitis in a day." He looked at me stupefied. I went on, "The Countess no more has colitis than you or I. It is all in her head, in her nerves. If I took away her colitis too rapidly, she might lose her mental balance, or take to something worse, say a lover. But give me a fortnight and she will leave Paris by her own wish."

He looked at me attentively.

"Now as to the Marquise. You were kind enough to compliment me for what I have done for her. Medically speaking I have done nothing. Deaf people suffer from their isolation from others, especially those deaf people who have no mental resources—and they are in the majority. To distract their attention from their misfortune is the only thing one can do for them. The Marquise's thoughts are occupied with colitis instead of with deafness and you have yourself seen with what result. I am beginning to have quite enough of colitis, and I am replacing it with a lap-dog."

"How old are you?" the Abbé said.

"Twenty-six."

"*Vous irez loin, mon fils!* You will go far!"

Yes, thought I. I am going far; far away from this life of humbug and deceit, from these artificial people, back to the enchanting island, to old Maria Porta-Lettere, Mastro Vincenzo and Gioconda, to clean my soul in the little house high on the top of the cliff. When would Sant'Antonio work his new miracle?

A fortnight after my interview with the Abbé, he wrote to tell me that the Countess had suddenly decided to accompany the Count to their château. It came as a surprise, but the Abbé must have had some inkling of it, for I had noticed a twinkling in his shrewd old eye the last time I saw him. He said the Marquise now took a long walk twice a day for the sake of her beloved pug.

By this time, I was so tired that I would lie down at night without taking my clothes off. But I still could not sleep, and yet I could not bring myself to use sleeping draughts. And I thought of the Countess. . . . The Countess! What had I to do with her?

Next week, I found a letter from the Abbé, with a PS. from the

Count: "You said you liked the song of the skylark best. He is singing now; you had better come." The skylark! And for two years I had heard nothing but sparrows! Besides, it was high time to look after my own nerves. . . .

THE CHÂTEAU, in its vast park of lime trees, was beautiful; the Louis XVI furniture in my sumptuous room was beautiful; Leo, the big St. Bernard dog, who followed me upstairs, was beautiful. So was the Countess in her simple white frock with a single La France rose in her waistband. I thought her eyes had grown bigger than ever. The Count was another man, with his rosy cheeks and wide-awake eyes. He and Monsieur l'Abbé greeted me as an old friend. We had a ride, a pleasant dinner, while the Countess teased me about the way I had bullied her in Paris. I still did not sleep that night, but I dreamed a lot.

Next day, the Vicomte Maurice arrived to visit. His loud monotonous giggle echoed through the room during the whole of dinner. He began at once to tell the Countess a very *risqué* story. Monsieur l'Abbé was beginning to look uncomfortable when the Count cut him short by telling his wife that he had heard a belated skylark singing his last concert.

"Nonsense," said the Vicomte. "There are still plenty of them on the wing, I shot one yesterday and a finer shot I never made, the little beast did not look bigger than a butterfly."

I was about to burst out indignantly when the Countess stopped me by saying, "You are a brute, Maurice, to kill a skylark."

"But you know, my dear Juliette, I am the crack shot of my regiment and I must keep on practising. Luckily there are any amount of swallows nesting round our barracks. They are busy feeding their young just now and I have a go at them every morning without even leaving my room. I know nothing better for daily practice than swallows." He stopped a moment carefully counting the drops he was pouring in his wineglass from a little bottle of medicine.

"Now, Juliette dear," he went on, "do come along with me to Paris tomorrow; you need a little spree after having been here all alone in this out-of-the-way place. I will take you to the Palais Royal to a most charming play, very *rigolo*. The bed stands in the middle of the stage with the lover hidden under it and the bridegroom who is an old"

The Count, annoyed, made a sign to his wife and we left the table.

I went to my room almost in tears with suppressed rage. While I was packing my bag, the Abbé entered. I begged him to tell the Count I had been summoned to Paris. "I never want to set my eyes on this brute any more or I will smash his monocle out of his empty head!"

"You had better not attempt anything of the sort; it is quite true he is a famous shot, I do not know how many duels he has fought. All I ask of you is to keep your nerves in hand for thirty-six hours. He is going away tomorrow night for a shooting tournament in Paris, and I shall be as glad to see him go as you are."

"Why?" I said. The Abbé remained silent. "Monsieur l'Abbé, I will tell you why. Because he is in love with his cousin and you distrust him."

"Since you have guessed the truth, I will tell you. He wanted to marry her, but she refused him. Luckily she doesn't like him."

"But she fears him, which is worse. I feel madness in him."

"You are right, it is true that the Vicomte is very odd. For instance, he is as strong as a horse, but always fussing about his health and taking drugs, as you may have noticed during dinner. . . . What on earth are you laughing at?"

"I am laughing at something funny that just passed through my head. All right; I have changed my mind, I am not going away tonight Do let us go down and join the men in the smoking-room."

The Vicomte was standing in front of a big mirror nervously twitching his moustache, the Count sitting reading.

"Monsieur le Suédois!" giggled the Vicomte, screwing in his monocle as if to see better how much I would stand. "I hope no new case of colitis has brought you here. And will you oblige me by telling me what *is* colitis? Is it dangerous?"

"Not if taken in hand immediately."

"By you, I suppose! Tell me what will happen to all your patients in Paris while you are away?"

"I suppose they will recover."

"I am sure they will," roared the Vicomte.

I took up a newspaper to steady myself. The Vicomte looked at the clock on the mantelpiece. "I am going up to fetch Juliette for a stroll in the park in this beautiful moonlight."

"My wife has gone to bed," said the Count.

"Why the devil didn't you tell me?" The Vicomte turned to the

Abbé, who was reading the *Journal des Débats*. "Any news, Monsieur l'Abbé?"

"I was just reading about your tournament."

"I'll bet you a thousand francs I win the medal," shouted the Vicomte. "Unless," he added with a malicious grin at me, "I get colitis! But cheer up, Doctor Colitis, don't look so dejected. Monsieur l'Abbé, can't you see Doctor Colitis is longing to have a look at your tongue?" The Abbé ignored him and the Vicomte went on. "Then how about you, Robert? You look sulky enough. Won't you show your tongue to the doctor? No? Well, Doctor Colitis, you have no luck. But to raise your spirits, I will show you mine."

He put out his tongue to me with a diabolical grin. I stood up and examined it. "You have a very nasty tongue," said I gravely, after a moment's silence, "a very nasty tongue!" He turned round immediately to examine his tongue in the mirror—the ugly, coated tongue of the inveterate smoker. I took his hand and felt his pulse, slashed to fever speed by champagne and brandy. "Your pulse is very quick," I said. "Unbutton your trousers!"

He obeyed automatically, and I gave him a rapid tap over his diaphragm, which started a hiccup. "Ah!" said I. Looking him fixedly in the eyes, I said slowly: "Thank you, that is enough."

The Count dropped his paper and the Abbé's mouth fell open.

I raised my glass to my lips. "To your health, Monsieur le Vicomte, to your health!"

Buttoning his trousers, he turned again to look at his tongue in the mirror. He made a desperate effort to laugh. "Do you mean to say that you think——"

"I do not say anything. I am not your doctor."

"But what am I to do?" he stammered.

"You are to go to bed, the sooner the better."

The Vicomte reeled to the door.

WHILE I WAS breakfasting in my room, there was a knock at the door and in came a timid-looking little man who saluted me most politely. It was the village doctor. "I was sent for last night by Vicomte Maurice," he said, "and have just called on him again. The case is somewhat obscure. I think it is safer to postpone a definite opinion."

"You are a wise man. Of course you keep him in bed?"

"Of course. He was to leave for Paris, but that is out of the question. He woke up with a violent headache and now a persistent hiccup has set in. He is convinced he has colitis. I confess I have never attended a case of colitis, I wanted to give him castor oil, but if colitis is anything like appendicitis, I suppose I had better not. What do you think?"

"I do not share your hesitation about the castor oil. A stiff dose, three tablespoonfuls would do him a lot of good. And to be on the safe side, no food for forty-eight hours."

"Did you really mean *three tablespoonfuls?*"

"Yes, at least, and above all no food whatsoever."

"Quite so," he said.

There was a full moon that night. I do not like the moon; it has whispered too many dreams into my ears. But the Countess loved the moon. While the Count read his paper, she wandered with me under the lime trees, now flooded with silver, now so dark that she had to take my arm. Once she said, "Why don't you like the moon?"

"I am afraid of it. It is so light that I can see your eyes like two luminous stars and yet so dark that I fear I might lose my way. I am a stranger in this land of dreams."

"Give me your hand and I will show you the way. I thought your hand was so strong, why does it tremble so? Yes, you are right, it is only a dream, don't speak or it will fly away!"

Just then an owl hooted its sinister warning and she gave a cry of fear. We walked back in silence.

WHILE WE were having our breakfast next morning, I told Leo, the St. Bernard, who always visited me, that I had to go back to Paris at once, it was safest so, because it was full moon, and I was twenty-six and his mistress was twenty-five. I went down and told the usual lie: that I was summoned to an important consultation and had to leave the castle by the morning train. The Count and the Abbé said they were sorry. Of course it was out of the question to disturb the Countess so early; I was besides to come back very soon.

As I drove to the station I met my friend the village doctor. The Vicomte, he said, was feeling very low and was yelling for food, but the doctor had been firm. The poultice on the stomach and the ice bag on

the head had been kept going the whole night, greatly interfering with the patient's sleep. Had I anything to suggest?

I said that if the condition remained stationary he might try for a change to put the ice bag on the stomach and the poultice on the head.

How long did I think the patient ought to be kept in bed?

"At least for another week, till the moon is gone."

The day had been long. I was glad to be back in the Avenue de Villiers. I went straight to bed. I did not feel well. I wondered if I had not got a bit of fever, but doctors never understand if they have fever or not. I fell asleep at once, but suddenly I became aware that I was not alone in the room. I opened my eyes and saw a livid face at the window. Slowly and silently something crept into the room and stretched a long white arm across the floor towards the bed.

"So you want to go back to the château after all!" it chuckled with its bloodless lips. "It was nice last night under the lime trees, wasn't it! Do you know why you put the Vicomte to bed? It was to prevent him from strolling about in the moonlight with"

I woke fully at last, dripping with perspiration, and through the open window I saw the full moon, beautiful and serene, looking down upon me from a cloudless sky. Luna! Virginal goddess! Can you understand sorrow? Can you teach forgetfulness?

LUCKILY FOR me I had other patients besides my fashionable clientele to save me from becoming a charlatan altogether. There were few specialists then. I was supposed to know everything, even surgery. It took me two years to realize that I was not fit to be a surgeon; I fear it took my patients less time. I did everything a doctor can be asked to do, even obstetrics, and God helped mother and child. When Napoleon's eagle eye flashed down the list of officers proposed for promotion to generals, he used to scribble in the margin of a name: "Is he lucky?" I had luck, amazing, almost uncanny luck with every patient. I was not a good doctor, my training had been too rapid; but I was a successful doctor. What is the secret of success? To inspire confidence. What is confidence? Does it come from the head or from the heart? Or is it a mighty tree of knowledge of good and evil with roots springing from the very depths of our being? Through what channels does it communicate with others, through the eye, or the spoken word?

I do not know, I only know that it cannot be acquired by book reading, nor at the bedsides of our patients. It is a magic gift. The doctor who possesses this gift can almost raise the dead. The doctor who does not possess it will have to submit to a consultation in a case of measles. This invaluable gift had been granted to me by no merit of mine. I discovered this in the nick of time, for I was beginning to become conceited. It made me understand how little I knew and made me turn more and more to Mother Nature, the wise old nurse, for help. It might even have made me become a good doctor had I stuck to my hospital work and my poor patients. But I became a fashionable doctor instead. If you come across a fashionable doctor, watch him carefully before handing yourself over to him. He may be a good doctor, but as a rule he is far too busy to listen with patience to your long story. He is liable to become a snob, to go to the garden party at the Embassy instead of to your last-born, whose whooping cough is worse. Unless his heart is very sound he will become indifferent to the suffering of others, like the pleasure-seeking people round him. You cannot be a good doctor without pity.

I used to ask myself why all these silly people waited for hours in my consulting-room. Why could I so often make them feel better, even by a mere touch of my hand? Why, even after the power of speech had gone and the terror of death was staring out of their eyes, did they become peaceful when I laid my hand on their forehead? Why did lunatics, screaming like wild animals, become calm and docile when I loosened their strait-jackets and held their hand in mine? I have always had a sneaking liking for lunatics. I used to wander about in the disturbed wards as among friends. I had been warned that this would end badly, but of course I knew better. One day, one of my best friends hit me on the head with a hammer he had got hold of in some inexplicable way, and I was carried unconscious to the infirmary. It was a terrible blow, my friend was an ex-blacksmith. They thought I had a fractured skull. Not I! It was only a concussion and my misadventure brought me a flattering compliment from the head of the clinic: "This confounded Swede has the skull of a bear; let's see if he broke the hammer!"

"After all, it may be in the head and not in the hand," said I to myself when my mental machinery set to work after a standstill of forty-eight hours. But why could I put my hand between the bars of the black

panther's cage in the menagerie and make the big cat roll over on his back, purring, with my hand between his paws? Why could I lance the abscess in Léonie's foot and pull out the splinter that had kept the big lioness in agony for a week? The local anaesthetic had proved a failure, but poor Léonie only moaned like a child when I pressed the pus out of her paw. When the operation was over and I was leaving the menagerie with the baby baboon that the lion tamer had presented to me as my fee, he said, "Doctor, you should have been an animal trainer."

And Ivan, the big polar bear, did he not, as soon as he saw me, come to the bars of his prison and standing on his hind legs put his black nose just in front of mine? No doubt he looked upon me as a compatriot, for of course we spoke Swedish, with a polar accent I picked up from him. I am sure he understood every word I said when I told him in a low voice how sorry I was for him and that when I was a boy I had seen two of his kinsmen swimming close to our boat among floating ice blocks in the land of our birth.

One of my animal patients was Jack, the famous gorilla of the Zoo, the only one of his tribe who had been taken prisoner and brought to the sunless land of his enemies. The life of an imprisoned ape is the life of a martyr. Consumption is the cause of death of most imprisoned monkeys. It is not the cold air, but the lack of air that starts the disease. Most monkeys stand the cold surprisingly well, if provided with ample accommodation for exercise and snug sleeping quarters, shared with a rabbit as bed companion for warmth. As soon as autumn begins, Mother Nature sets to work to provide their shivering bodies with extra fur coats, suitable for northern winters. Most zoological gardens ignore this fact. Perhaps it is better so. Death is more merciful than we are.

Poor Jack put his horny hand in mine as soon as he saw me. Often he would look at the palm of my hand with great attention, as if he knew something about palmistry, bend my fingers one after another as if to see how the joints were working, then he would look with the same attention at his own hand with a chuckle, as if to say that he saw no great difference between the two; and he was quite right. He had been taught by his keeper to eat at a low table, napkin under his chin. He had even been provided with a knife and fork but he preferred to eat with his fingers, as did our forefathers up till a few hundred years ago.

Poor Jack! He had been ailing ever since Christmas. His complexion became ashy grey, and his eyes sank deep into their sockets. A dry ominous cough set in. I took his temperature several times but had to be very careful for, like children, he was apt to break the thermometer to see what was moving inside. One day as he sat on my lap, he had a violent fit of coughing which brought on a haemorrhage. The sight of the blood terrified him, as is the case with most people. One morning I found him lying on his bed with the blanket pulled over his head, just as my human patients used to lie when they were tired to death and sick of everything. He must have heard me coming for he stretched out his hand and got hold of mine. I sat there with his hand in mine, listening to his heavy irregular respiration. Presently a sharp fit of coughing shook his whole body. He sat up in his bed and put his two hands to his temples in a gesture of despair. He had cast off his animal disguise and become a dying human being. So near had he come to me that he was deprived of the only privilege God has granted to the animals in compensation for the sufferings man inflicts upon them—that of an easy death. He died slowly, strangled by the same Executioner I had so often seen at work in the hospital.

And after? What became of my poor friend Jack? I know that his body went to the Anatomical Institution and his skeleton, with its large brainpan, still stands erect in the Musée Dupuytren. But is that all?

Dogs



I WAS beginning to be known now as a dog doctor. The opinions as to my skill as a doctor to my fellow creatures have been somewhat divided, but my reputation as a reliable dog doctor has never been seriously challenged. It is easier to understand a dog than a man and easier to love him. The intelligence of the dog is proverbial and he cannot dissimulate, cannot lie. He is a saint, straightforward and honest by nature. If in exceptional cases there appear some stigmas of hereditary sin traceable to his wild ancestors, who had to rely on cunning in their fight for existence, these stigmas will disappear when experience

has taught him that he can rely upon just dealing from us. If these stigmas should remain in a dog who is well treated, he is not normal, he is suffering from moral insanity.

A dog gladly admits the superiority of his master, but he does not consider himself a slave. His submission is voluntary and he expects his small rights to be respected. He looks upon his master as his king, almost as his god; he expects his god to be severe if need be, but he expects him to be just. He knows that his god can read his thoughts and he can read his master's thoughts, understand his moods, and foretell his decisions. He knows when he is not wanted, lies still for hours when his king is hard at work. But when his king is sad and worried he creeps up and lays his head on his lap. Don't worry! Never mind if they all abandon you! I am here. Let us go for a walk and forget all about it!

It is strange and very pathetic to watch the behaviour of a dog when his master is ill. The dog, warned by his infallible instinct, is afraid of disease, afraid of death. A dog accustomed to sleep on his master's bed is reluctant to remain there when his master is seriously ill. Even in the rare exceptions to this rule, he leaves his master at the approach of death, hiding in a corner of the room and whining pitifully.

What intimation of death does a dog have? At least as much as we do, probably a good deal more. I am reminded of a poor woman in Anacapri who was slowly dying of consumption. Her only friend was a mongrel dog, who never left the foot of her bed. One day, as I happened to pass by, I found Don Salvatore there and he asked if I thought the time had come to bring her the Last Sacraments. The woman looked about as usual, her pulse was not worse. I told the priest she might last for another week.

Just as we were leaving the room the dog jumped down from the bed with a howl of distress and crouched in the corner. I could see no change in the woman's looks, but found that her pulse was now almost imperceptible. She made a desperate effort to say something I could not understand. Then she raised her emaciated arm pointing to the dog. This time I understood and I bent over her and said I would take care of him. She nodded contentedly, her eyes closed and the peace of death spread over her face.

The cause of this woman's death was an internal haemorrhage. How did the dog know before I knew? He followed his mistress to the

cemetery, the only mourner. Next day old Pacciale, the gravedigger, told me that the dog was still lying on her grave. It rained torrents the whole day and the following night, but in the morning the dog was still there. I sent Pacciale with a leash to try to take him to San Michele, but the dog growled savagely and refused to move. The third day I went to the cemetery and with great difficulty got him to follow me home, where he lived happily with my other dogs.

A dog can be taught to do almost anything with friendly encouragement, patience and a biscuit. Never lose your temper or use violence. Corporal punishment inflicted on an intelligent dog is an indignity which reflects upon his master. It is besides a psychological error. But, let me add that naughty puppies as well as very small children are quite welcome to a little spanking now and then. When a dog is ill, he will submit to almost anything, even a painful operation, if it is explained to him in a kind but firm voice that it must be done and why. Never coax a sick dog to eat, he often does so only to oblige you, even if his instinct warns him to abstain from food. Dogs can be without food for several days without inconvenience. A dog can stand pain with great courage, but he likes you to tell him how sorry you are for him. Never disturb a sick dog when not absolutely necessary. All animals wish to be left alone when they are ill and also when they are about to die.

Alas! the life of a dog is short and there are none of us who have not been in mourning for a lost friend. Your first words after you have laid him to rest are that you will never have another dog; no other dog could be to you what he has been. You are mistaken. It is not *a* dog we love, it is *the* dog. They are all ready to love you and be loved by you. They are all representatives of the most lovable and, morally speaking, most perfect creation of God. If you loved your dead friend in the right way, you cannot do without another. Remember when his time comes what I am going to tell you now. Do not send him to the lethal chamber or ask your doctor to see that he is given a painless death under an anaesthetic. It is not a painless death, it is a distressing death. Dogs often resist the deadly effect of these gases and drugs in the most heart-rending way. The dose which would kill a man often leaves a dog alive for long minutes of mental and bodily suffering. I have been present several times at these massacres in lethal chambers and I have myself had to kill dogs under anaesthetics, and I know what I am talking about.

I shall never do it again. Ask a man you can trust, who is fond of dogs, to take your old dog in the park, to give him a bone and while he is eating it to shoot him with a revolver through the ear. It is an instantaneous and painless death. Many of my old dogs have died so by my own hand. They lie buried under the cypresses and over their graves stands an antique marble column. There also lies another dog, for twelve years the faithful friend of a gracious lady who, although as queen she has to be the mother of a whole country, my own country, has enough room left in her heart to bring a bunch of flowers to his grave every time she comes to Capri.

FATE HAS willed that the most lovable of all animals should be the bearer of the most terrible of all diseases—hydrophobia. I witnessed at the Institut Pasteur the early stages of the long-drawn battle between science and the dreaded foe and I also witnessed the final victory. It was dearly won. Hecatombs of dogs had to be sacrificed and some human lives as well. I used to visit the doomed animals and give them what little comfort I could, but it became so painful to me that for some time I gave up going to the Institut Pasteur. Still I never doubted it was right, that what was done had to be done. Pasteur was violently attacked not only by ignorant and well-meaning dog lovers but also by many of his colleagues; yet those who saw him knew how much he suffered from the tortures he had to inflict upon the dogs. He loved dogs and was the most kindhearted of men. Everything that could possibly be done to minimize their sufferings was done. Dogs were inoculated with serum and regularly taken for bite tests to the kennels where forty rabid dogs were kept. The handling of these dogs, all foaming with rage, was a dangerous affair, but Pasteur was absolutely fearless. Once, when he was anxious to secure a sample of saliva straight from the jaws of a rabid dog, I saw him with the glass tube between his lips draw a few drops of the deadly saliva from the mouth of a rabid bulldog, held on the table by two assistants, their hands protected by leather gloves. Most of these laboratory dogs were homeless strays, picked up by the police in the streets of Paris. Here they suffered and died in obscurity, Unknown Soldiers in the battle against disease and death.

Then came the terrible episode of the six Russian peasants bitten by a pack of mad wolves and sent to the Institut Pasteur at the expense of

the Tsar. They were all horribly mauled and their chances were almost nil, for hydrophobia in wolves is far more dangerous than in dogs. Pasteur knew this and, had he not been the man he was, he would no doubt have declined to take them. They were placed in a separate ward in charge of Professor Tillaux, the most eminent and humane surgeon in Paris. Pasteur came every morning to inoculate them, watching them anxiously. Nobody could understand a word they said.

One afternoon on the ninth day I was trying to pour a drop of milk down the lacerated throat of one of the mujiks, a giant whose face had almost been torn away, when something wild and uncanny flashed in his eyes, the muscles of the jaws contracted and opened spasmodically with a snapping sound and a ghastly cry I had never heard before from man or animal rang out. He made a violent effort to spring out of bed and nearly knocked me down, as I tried to hold him back. His arms, strong as the paws of a bear, closed on me like a vice. I felt the foul breath from his foaming mouth close to mine and the poisonous saliva dripping down my face. I gripped at his throat, the bandage slipped off his ghastly wound, and as I drew back my hands from his snapping jaws, they were red with blood. A convulsive trembling passed over his body, his arms relaxed their grasp and fell inert at his side.

I staggered to the door in search of the strongest disinfectant I could get hold of. In the corridor sat Sister Marthe, drinking her afternoon coffee. She looked at me, terrified, and I gulped down her coffee just as I was going to faint. By God's mercy there was not a scratch on my face or hands. Sister Marthe kept my secret. Strict orders had been given not to approach these men unless absolutely necessary and then only with hands protected by thick gloves. I later told the Professor himself.

"Confounded Swede," he muttered, "you are as mad as the mujik!"

In the evening the mujik, tied hand and foot to the iron bars of the bed, was carried to an isolated pavilion. I went to see him next morning. The bandage covered his face and I could see nothing but his eyes. I shall never forget their expression, they haunted me for years. His breathing was short and irregular, like the "Cheyne-Stokes respiration" —the well-known precursor of death. He talked rapidly in a hoarse voice, now and then interrupted by a wild cry of distress which made me shudder. I listened to the rush of unknown words and thought I distinguished one word repeated with desperate accent: *"Crestitsa!*

Crestitsa!" I looked attentively at his eyes, kind, humble, imploring eyes.

"Run and fetch a crucifix," I said to a nun.

We laid the crucifix on the bed. The flow of words ceased. He lay there silent, his eyes fixed on the crucifix. Suddenly his giant body stiffened in a last violent contraction and the heart stood still.

The next day another mujik showed signs of hydrophobia, and soon another, and three days later both of them were raving mad. Their screams and howls could be heard all over the hospital. Nobody wanted to go near the ward; even the courageous sisters fled in terror. I can see now the white face of Pasteur as he passed from one bed to the other, looking at the doomed men with infinite compassion in his eyes. He sank down on a chair, his head between his hands. Tillaux was sent for in the midst of an operation; he rushed into the ward, his apron stained with blood. He went up to Pasteur and laid his hand on his shoulder. The two men looked at each other in silence. The kind blue eyes of the great surgeon, who had seen so much horror and suffering, glanced at the men and his face grew white.

"I cannot stand it," he said in a broken voice.

These two men took a decision: the only right one and an honour to them both. The next morning all was quiet in the ward. During the night the doomed men had been helped to a painless death.

Pasteur's vaccination against rabies has reduced the mortality in this terrible disease to a minimum and Behring's anti-diphtheric serum saves the lives of countless children every year. Are not these facts alone sufficient to make lovers of animals understand that discoverers of new worlds like Pasteur, of new remedies against hitherto incurable diseases like Behring, must be left to pursue their researches unhampered?

PARIS IN summer-time is a very pleasant place for those who belong to the Paris that plays, but if you happen to belong to the Paris that works, it becomes another matter. Especially so if you have to cope with an epidemic of typhoid in the Villette among the hundreds of Scandinavian workmen, and an epidemic of diphtheria in the Quartier Montparnasse among your Italian friends. The few families who hadn't any children chose this time to bring them to the world, as often as not with no other assistance than myself. Most of the children too small to catch typhoid started scarlet fever or whooping cough. Of course there

was no money to pay for a French doctor, so it fell upon me to look after them all. It was no joke.

I am ashamed to say that I got on better with the Italians than with my own compatriots, who were often exacting and selfish. The Italians, who had brought nothing with them from their own country but their patience, cheerfulness and charming manners, were always grateful, and extraordinarily helpful to each other. When diphtheria broke out in the Salvatore family, Arcangelo Fusco, the street sweeper, stopped work and became a devoted nurse to them all. All three little girls caught diphtheria, the eldest died and the following day the worn-out mother caught the terrible disease. Only the child of sorrow, Petruccio, was spared by the inscrutable will of God.

There was diphtheria in every house in the street. The hospitals for children were overcrowded; even had there been a vacant bed, the chances of getting admission for these foreign children would have been next to none. So they had to be attended by Arcangelo and myself. No doctor who has gone through the ordeal of fighting single-handed an epidemic of diphtheria among the very poor with no means of disinfection can think of such an experience without a shudder. I sat for hours, painting and scraping the throat of one child after another; there was not much more to be done in those days. And when it was no longer possible to detach the poisonous membranes obstructing the air passages, when the child became livid on the point of suffocation, the urgent indication for tracheotomy presented itself. Must I operate at once on this low bed, by the light of this wretched oil lamp and with no other assistant than a street sweeper? Dare I wait and try to get hold of a surgeon? Alas! I have waited till tomorrow and seen the child die. I have operated at once and no doubt saved the life of a child; but I have also operated and seen the child die under my knife.

I was myself in deadly fear of diphtheria, but Arcangelo had never a thought for his own safety, he only thought of the others. When all was over, I was complimented right and left, but nobody ever said a word to Arcangelo Fusco, who had sold his Sunday clothes to pay the undertaker who took away the body of the little Salvatore girl.

When all was over, he returned to his street sweeping and I to my fashionable patients. The boulevards were now crowded with pleasure-seeking foreigners, in Paris to spend their surplus money. Many sat in

my waiting-room reading their Baedekers, always insisting on passing in first, seldom asking for anything more than a tonic, from a man more in need of it than they were. Others, comfortably established on their chaise-longues in their tea gowns, sent for me from their fashionable hotels expecting me to "fix them up" for a ball.

What a waste of time! thought I as I walked home, dragging my tired legs along the burning asphalt of the boulevards under the dust-covered chestnut trees.

"I know what is the matter with you and me," said I to the drooping chestnut trees. "We need a change of air. But how are we to get away from this inferno, you with your aching roots imprisoned under the asphalt and I with all these rich Americans in my waiting-room and lots of patients in their beds? And if I were to go away, who would look after the monkeys? Who would cheer up the panting polar bear? He only understands Swedish! And what about the Quartier Montparnesse?" I shuddered as the word flew through my brain. I saw the livid face of a child in the dim light of a little oil lamp, I saw the blood oozing from the cut I had just made in the child's throat, and I heard the cry of terror from the heart of the mother. There was decidedly something wrong with me. I posted a sign:

The doctor will be away for a month. Consult Dr. Norstrom. Boulevard Haussmann 66.

Lappland: 1902



THE SUN had gone down behind Vassojarvi but the day was still bright with flame-coloured light slowly deepening into orange and ruby. A golden mist descended over the blue mountains where patches of purple snow and yellow silver birches glistened with hoar-frost.

The day's work was over. The men were returning to the camp with their lassos over their shoulders, the women with their huge birch bowls of fresh milk. The herd of reindeer surrounded by vigilant dogs stood collected round the camp, safe for the night from wolf and lynx. The

calling of the calves and the clatter of hoofs gradually died away: all was silent but for the occasional barking of a dog, the cry of a nightjar or the hooting of an eagle owl from the mountains. I sat in the place of honour by the side of Turi in the smoke-filled tent. Ellekare, his wife, threw a slice of reindeer's cheese in the kettle suspended over the fire and handed us, the men first and then the women and children, our plates of thick soup. What remained in the kettle was divided among the dogs off duty who had crept in and lain by the fire. Then we drank each in turn a cup of excellent coffee from the two cups of the household and all took out their short pipes and began to smoke. The men pulled off their reindeer shoes. I admired the shape of their small feet with their elastic insteps and strong, protruding heels. Some of the women took their sleeping babies from their cradles of moss and birch-bark, suspended from the tent poles, to give them the breast.

"I am sorry you are leaving so soon," said Turi. "I like you."

Turi spoke Swedish; he had many years ago been to Lulea and met the governor of the province, who was an uncle of mine. Turi was a mighty man, undisputed ruler over his camp, containing his five married sons, their wives and children, all hard at work from morning till night to attend to his herd of a thousand reindeer.

"We ourselves will soon have to move down to the pine forest," Turi went on. "The snow will soon be too hard for the reindeer to get at the moss. I can hear by the way the dogs are barking that they are already smelling wolves." He said he had seen the trail of the old bear who often shuffled about in the gorge. Three times they had ringed him when he was asleep in the winter but he had always managed to escape, he was very cunning. Turi had shot at him, but he had only shaken his head and looked at him with his cunning eyes. He knew that only a silver bullet, cast on a Saturday night near the cemetery, could kill him, for he was befriended by the Uldra, the Little People who lived under the earth.

When the bear went to sleep in the winter the Uldra brought him food; of course no animal could sleep the whole winter without food, chuckled Turi.

The bear, Turi said, was not cunning and treacherous like the wolf. The bear had twelve men's strength and one man's cunning. The wolf had twelve men's cunning and one man's strength. The bear liked clean

fighting. If he met a man and the man went up to him and said: "Come, let us have a fight, I am not afraid of you," the bear only knocked him down and scrambled away without doing him any harm. The bear never attacked a woman, all she had to do was to show him that she was a woman and not a man. The wolf was the worst enemy of the Lapps. He dared not attack a herd of reindeer, he stood quite still to let the wind carry his smell to them. As soon as the reindeer smelt the wolf they dispersed in fear, then the wolf came up and killed them one by one. God had created all the animals except the wolf, who was begotten by the devil.

Then there was the wolverine who springs to the throat of the reindeer just by the big vein and hangs on for miles till the reindeer has lost so much blood that he falls down dead. There was also the eagle who carried away new-born calves, and the lynx who crept up stealthily to jump at strays.

Turi said he could never understand how the Lapps had managed to keep their herds together in old times before they had associated themselves with the dog. In former days the dog, who is the cleverest of all animals, used to hunt the reindeer in company with the wolf. But he found out that it would suit him better to work with the Lapps, so he offered to enter into their service on condition that he should be treated as a friend as long as he lived and that when he was about to die he should be hanged. This is why the Lapps always hanged their dogs when they were too old to work.

I asked Turi what happened when the Lapps were taken ill and how they got on without a doctor. He said they were rarely ill except in very severe winters when it happened not so seldom that the new-born baby was frozen to death. The doctor came to see them twice a year by order of the King and Turi thought that was enough. He had to ride on horseback across the marshes for two days, it took him another day to cross the mountain on foot and last time he forded the river he was nearly drowned. Luckily there were healers among them who could cure most of their ailments. The Uldra had taught them their art. Some of these healers could take away pain simply by laying their hand on the aching spot. All animals came to a healer without fear, for the animals recognize those who are befriended by the Uldra. You could recognize a healer by the shape of his hand.

I put forth my hand to Turi, who had no idea I was a doctor. He looked at it attentively, bent the fingers, measured the span between thumb and first finger and muttered something to his wife, who in turn took my hand in her brown little claw with an uneasy glance. "He is a healer, he is a healer," she said.

"He is befriended by the Uldra," they all repeated with a frightened expression in their eyes.

Turi said it was time to go to sleep, I was to start at daybreak. We all lay down round the smouldering fire. All I could see was the Pole Star shining down upon me through the smoke hole of the tent. I felt in my sleep the warm weight of a dog over my breast and the soft touch of his nose in my hand.

We were all on our legs at daybreak and they wished me God-speed. I was to arrive the next day at Forsstugan, the nearest human habitation in the wilderness of marshes, torrents, lakes and forests which was the home of the homeless Lapps. Ristin, Turi's sixteen-year-old granddaughter, was to be my guide.

Ristin walked in front of me in her white reindeer tunic and red woollen cap. Her broad leather belt was studded with buckles and squares of solid silver. Suspended from her belt hung her knife, her tobacco pouch and her mug. A small axe was stuck under the belt. She wore leggings of soft, white reindeer skin, white reindeer shoes trimmed with blue thread. On her back was a birch-bark knapsack twice as big as my own.

She moved with amazing speed up and down hill, across the grassy tundras and through groves of fir trees. Towards evening we wandered through a darkening forest on a carpet of silvery-grey moss, in the wonderful twilight of the North. How Ristin could find her way through the trackless forest was incomprehensible to me. We camped for the night, and next day crossed a marshy plateau with nothing to guide us but the sun.

At one time we were enveloped in a sudden mist as impenetrable as London fog. Holding each other by the hand, we struggled on for an hour or two, and then were forced to stop. We sat for hours on our knapsacks, the mist sticking to our skin like a sheet of ice-cold water. Then a strong wind began to blow and the curtain of fog lifted. Deep below, in a valley at our very feet, we saw a huge river glistening

in the sun like a sword. Along the opposite shore stretched a dark pine forest. Ristin pointed to a thin column of smoke rising over the tree-tops.

"Forsstugan," said Ristin.

IN FRONT of his red-painted house stood Lars Anders of Forsstugan in his sheepskin coat, six feet six in his wooden shoes.

"Good day in the forest!" he said. "Where dost thou come from? Put another log on the fire, Kerstin," he called to his wife. "They have swum the river, they must dry their clothes."

Ristin and I sat down on the low bench before the fire.

"He is wet as an otter," said Mother Kerstin, helping me to pull off my clothes and hanging them to dry on the rope across the ceiling. Ristin had already taken hers off. We sat side by side on the wooden bench before the fire, naked as our Creator made us. The two old folk thought it was all right, and so it was.

An hour later I was inspecting my new quarters in Uncle Lars's long black Sunday coat of homespun cloth and wooden shoes while Ristin sat in the kitchen where Mother Kerstin was baking bread. A stranger who had come yesterday with a Finnish Lapp had eaten up all the bread in the house, she said. I was to sleep in a little room over the cow stable.

I went with Uncle Lars to the *herbre* to fetch a sheepskin to put over my bed. This store-room stood on four poles, a man's height over the ground, as a protection against four-footed visitors and deep snow. It was full of clothes and furs hung on the antlers nailed to the walls. On the floor lay a sledge rug of splendid bearskin. On a peg hung Mother Kerstin's wedding dress, her gaily coloured silk bodice beautifully embroidered with silver thread, her long green woollen skirt, her tippet of squirrel skin, her bonnet trimmed with old lace, her red leather belt with silver buckles. As we climbed down the ladder of the *herbre,* I noticed that Uncle Lars did not lock the door.

We sat down under the big fir by the kitchen door to Lappland trout, the best in the world, home-made bread just out of the oven, fresh cheese and home-brewed ale.

"Hast thou seen the King?" Uncle Lars asked.

No, I had not come by Stockholm. I had come straight from another land, from a town many times bigger than Stockholm.



Uncle Lars did not know there was a town bigger than Stockholm.

I told Mother Kerstin how much I had admired her wedding dress. She smiled and said her mother had worn it at her own wedding.

"Surely you don't leave the *herbre* open at night?"

"Why not?" said Uncle Lars.

"That bearskin alone is worth a lot of money, and any antiquarian in Stockholm would pay several hundred riksdaler for the dress."

The two old folk looked at me with surprise.

"But I shot that bear myself and that is my wife's *wedding* dress! They belong to us as long as we are alive, and when we die, they go to our son. Who would carry them away?" Uncle Lars seemed almost vexed. "Now I understand what he means," he said suddenly to his wife, "he means those people they call thieves!"

I asked Uncle Lars about the stranger who had eaten all the bread. He could not speak a word of Swedish, said Lars Anders. The Lapp who was carrying his fishing tackle said they had lost their way. They were half dead with hunger. Uncle Lars showed me the coin he had insisted on leaving. Was it possible that it was gold?

It was an English sovereign. On the floor by the window lay a *Times* addressed to Sir John Scott. I opened it and read in huge letters:

TERRIBLE OUTBREAK OF CHOLERA IN NAPLES;
OVER A THOUSAND CASES A DAY

Next day, Pelle, Uncle Lars's grandson, stood in front of the house with a shaggy little Norwegian pony. Uncle Lars said I had nothing to worry about, Pelle knew the way, it was an easy and comfortable journey this time of year. Eight hours ride through the forest to Rukne, three hours downstream in Liss Jocum's boat, six hours on foot across the mountain to the church village, two hours across the lake to Losso Jarvi, eight hours drive to the new railway station. No passenger trains, but the engineer would let me stand on the locomotive for two hundred miles till I could catch one.

Uncle Lars was right, it was an easy, comfortable journey—at least it seemed so to me then.

Equally "easy and comfortable" was the journey across Europe in the wretched trains of those days with hardly any sleep. Lappland to Naples, look at the map!

Naples



I HAVE just been reading *Letters from a Mourning City,* which I wrote about my stay in Naples. There is a good deal of swaggering about how I went night and day to the infected poor quarters, covered with lice, feeding on rotten fruit, sleeping in a filthy lodging-house. All this is quite true, but I had the cheek to write that I was not afraid of cholera, not afraid of Death. I was horribly afraid of both. I described how, half faint from the stench of carbolic acid in the empty train, I stepped out on the deserted piazza late in the evening, how I passed long convoys of carts filled with corpses, how I spent the night among the dying. But there is no description of how a couple of hours after my arrival I was back once more in the station inquiring for the first train for Rome, for anywhere to get out of this hell. There was no train till the next day so there was nothing to do but to return to the dying.

How much easier it would have been for them and for me, if only their agony was not so long, so terrible! There they were, lying for hours, for days, cold as corpses, with wide-open eyes and mouths, to all appearances dead and yet still alive. Did they feel anything, understand anything? So much the better for the few who could still swallow the teaspoonful of laudanum volunteers rushed in to pour into their mouths. It might at least finish them off before the soldiers and the half-drunk gravediggers came at night to throw them in a heap in the cholera pit. How many were thrown there alive? Hundreds, I should say.

As the epidemic approached its climax, they began to fall in the streets as if struck by lightning, to die in a few hours. The cabby who drove me in the morning in tearing spirits to the convict prison was lying dead in his cab when I came to look for him in the evening. Nobody wanted to help me get him out of the cab. I drove him back to Naples myself. Nobody wanted anything to do with him there either. I drove him to the cemetery.

Often when I returned in the evening to the lodging-house, I was so tired that I threw myself on the bed, without undressing, without even

washing. What was the good of washing in filthy water, of disinfecting myself, when the food I ate, the water I drank, the very air I breathed was infected! Often I was too frightened to go to bed, to be alone, but rushed out to spend the night in church. All the churches of Naples were open the whole night, ablaze with votive candles and thronged with people.

I was terrified of the rats. They seemed as much at home in the slums as the wretched human beings, as tame as cats and almost as big. They were on the whole well behaved, at least with the living, attending to their business of being scavengers.

But when the sanitary commission vainly attempted to disinfect the sewers, the situation changed. Millions of rats who had been living there unmolested since the time of the Romans invaded the town. Intoxicated by the sulphur fumes and carbolic acid, they rushed about like mad dogs. These sewer rats were quite bald, with extraordinarily long red tails, fierce bloodshot eyes and pointed black teeth as long as a ferret's. If you hit them with your stick, they would hang on to it like a bulldog. Never in my life have I been so afraid of any animal as I was of these mad rats. More than one hundred severely bitten people were taken to the hospital the first day of the invasion.

I shall never forget a night in a sort of cave, lit only by a little oil lamp before the Madonna. The father of the family living there had been dead for two days but the body was still there under a heap of rags; the family had hidden it from the police, a common practice in the slums. I was by the side of the daughter, beating off rats with my stick. She was quite cold, but still conscious. I could hear the rats crunching at the body of the father. It made me so nervous that I had to put him upright in the corner like a grandfather clock. Soon the rats began ravenously eating his feet and legs. I could not stand it. Faint with fear I rushed away.

A favourite resting-place of mine was a little café where a waiter called Cesare became a great friend of mine. After the third case of cholera in my lodging-house I moved into an empty room in the house he lived in. My new quarters were as dirty as the old but it was much better to be in Cesare's company. His wife was dead but Mariuccia, his black-eyed, red-lipped daughter, was very much alive. She washed my linen, cooked my macaroni, and made up my bed when she did not forget it. She was

always coming into my room with a bunch of grapes or a plate of figs. When she had nothing else to offer me she took the red rose from her black curls and handed it to me with her siren smile and a sparkling question in her eyes. The whole day she sang in the kitchen in her strong, shrill voice: *"Amore! Amore!"* In the night I heard her tossing in her bed on the other side of the partition. She said she could not sleep; she was afraid to *dormire sola,* to sleep alone. I was awake, too. I did not like to *dormire solo* either.

What new fear was making my heart beat so tumultuously? Why, when sitting half asleep in the side aisle of Santa Maria del Carmine, had I not noticed before all those beautiful girls in their black mantillas kneeling on the marble floor by my side and smiling at me on the sly in the midst of their prayers? Why had I been unaware that it was not the wine in the café but the sparkle in Carmela's eyes that went to my head? Why had I heard only the groans of the dying when from every street sounded laughter and love songs, when under every portico stood a girl whispering to her lover? My colleague Dr. Villari told me that a frenzy of immorality was sweeping Naples; no decent woman dared leave her house. Had all these people gone mad with lust in the very face of Death? And was I, too, bewitched?

I was sitting at my usual table in the café when a boy ran up and handed me a piece of paper. "Come," was scribbled on it.

Five minutes later we stopped before the iron gates of the convent of the Sepolte Vive, "The Living Sepulchre," a grim old building with small Gothic windows, sombre and silent as a grave. The nuns entered these gates wrapped in the shroud of the dead and laid in a coffin, and never went out as long as they were alive. I was let in by Sister Ursula, a young nun who was strikingly beautiful. She preceded me across the cloister garden ringing a bell.

Their doctor had died of cholera and they had three fresh cases. Panic-stricken nuns were running through the corridors, others praying in the chapel. The three nuns were lying on straw mattresses in their cells. Later in the day I went to see the Abbess in her cell. She looked at me with cold, penetrating eyes, severe as those of a judge. Her face was rigid and lifeless as if cut in marble. I told her the sanitary conditions in the convent were appalling, the water in the garden well was polluted, the place must be evacuated or they would all die of cholera. She answered

it was against the rules of their order, no nun had ever left it alive They were in the hands of the Madonna and of San Gennaro

I never left the convent for several unforgettable days of terror I did not seem to need sleep Fear and innumerable cups of black coffee had roused me into an extraordinary state of excitement which took away all fatigue My only relaxation was to steal into the cloister garden and sit on an old marble bench under the cypresses Fragments of antique marbles were lying all over the garden, the well head was made out of a Roman altar, it is now in the courtyard of San Michele Half hidden among the cypresses stood a little Eros on a column of African marble Once Sister Ursula brought me coffee and stood waiting for the cup while I drank as slowly as possible to make her stand there a little longer Did she understand what my eyes said to her but my lips dared not say, that I was young and she was fair? I almost thought she did

I asked her why she had buried her young life in the grave of the Sepolte Vive Did she not know that outside this place the world was beautiful, full of joy and not only of sorrow? "Do you know who is this boy?" I said, pointing to the little Eros

She thought it was an angel

"No, it is the oldest of all gods, and he still rules over our world today He is the god of Love "

She crossed herself and hurried out of the garden

A moment later another nun came rushing to take me to the Abbess who had fainted in the chapel, they had just carried her to her cell The Abbess looked at me with her terrible eyes She raised her hand and pointed to the crucifix on the wall, they brought her the Last Sacraments She never spoke, the action of the heart grew weaker and weaker She lay there the whole day, the crucifix on her breast, her rosary in her hands, her eyes closed, her body slowly growing cold Once or twice I thought I heard a faint beating of the heart, soon I heard nothing It was almost a relief to me that the Abbess's eyes were closed for ever, there was something in them that frightened me I looked at the young nun by my side

"I cannot stay here any longer," I said "I have not slept, my head is swimming I am not myself, I do not know what I am doing I am afraid of myself, I am afraid of you " She had not time to draw back, my arms had closed round her

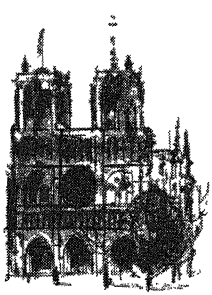


"Pietà!" she murmured.

Suddenly she pointed towards the bed and sprang out of the room with a cry of terror. The eyes of the old Abbess were looking straight at me, wide open, menacing. I bent over her, I thought I heard a faint fluttering of the heart. Could those terrible eyes see, had they seen? I left the Sepolte Vive, never to return.

The memory of my disgraceful conduct at the Sepolte Vive haunted me for years. I cannot excuse it even now, but maybe I can explain it. I have not been watching during all these years the battle between Life and Death without getting to know something of the two combatants. When I first saw Death at work in the hospital wards it was a mere wrestling match between the two. Then I saw Him at Naples killing more than a thousand people a day; in the Messina earthquake, burying over one hundred thousand people; at Verdun, His arms red with blood to the elbows, slaughtering four hundred thousand men. Watching Him operate on a large scale, I have begun to understand something of the warfare between Life and Death. Their battle is regulated by an immutable law of equilibrium. Wherever this equilibrium is upset by pestilence, earthquake or war, vigilant Nature sets to work to readjust the balance, to call forth new beings to take the place of the fallen. Compelled by the irresistible force of a Natural Law men and women fall into each other's arms, blindfolded by lust, unaware that Death presides over their mating, his aphrodisiac in one hand, his narcotic in the other.

Back to Paris



I HAD BEEN away three months instead of one. My patients came back to me, all speaking kindly of Dr. Norstrom. I should not have minded if they had stuck to him. I had my hands full and I knew that his practice was dwindling. And Norstrom had always been a loyal friend, and helped me out of many scrapes when I was still dabbling in surgery. I well remember, for instance, the case of Baron B. One of the oldest members of the Swedish colony, he had been attended by Norstrom for years. One day Norstrom with his fatal timidity suggested that I be called in in

consultation. Norstrom wanted an immediate operation, I was against it. The Baron told me he was getting tired of Norstrom's gloomy face and asked me to take him in hand. I refused, but Norstrom insisted. The Baron's condition improved rapidly, I was congratulated on all sides.

A month later it became clear to me that Norstrom had been right in his diagnosis; but it was now too late for an operation, the man was doomed.

I wrote to his nephew in Stockholm to take him home to die in his own country. It was with the greatest difficulty that I persuaded the old gentleman to go. He did not want to leave me; I was the only doctor who understood his case. Later his nephew wrote that his uncle had left me a valuable repeater in remembrance of what I had done for him. I often make it strike the hour to remind me what sort of stuff a doctor's reputation is made of.

I was making lots of money, and twice I rushed down to Capri, once to buy Mastro Vincenzo's house, another time to make an offer on the ruined chapel—it took me ten years to get it.

Yet for some reason my periods of wealth were not seldom interrupted by moments when I had no money at all. Often I had to borrow money from Norstrom. He said the remedy was to keep accounts and to send regular bills to my patients. I said I had never sent bills and was not going to do it. Our profession was not a trade but an art; trafficking in suffering was a humiliation to me. I blushed when a patient put his twenty-franc piece on my table and when he put it in my hand I felt as if I wanted to hit him. What was the cash value to a mother of the life of her child?

Norstrom said that my inability to pocket my fee without blushing derived from vanity and conceit. If he was right my colleagues seemed singularly free from this defect.

In many consulting-rooms the patient put his money on the table before opening his mouth to relate his woes. Before an operation it was the rule that half the sum be paid in advance. I knew of a case where the patient was roused from chloroform and the operation postponed in order to verify the validity of a cheque.

Professor Tillaux, who had been in charge of the mujiks, was the only surgeon I dared turn to with a penniless patient. He was like a

father to his patients; the poorer they looked the more he seemed interested in their welfare. I owe him a lot; I even owe him that I can still walk about on my two legs.

I HAD WORKED hard during another long, hot summer without a single day of rest, harassed by insomnia and despondency. I was irritable with my patients, and even Norstrom began to lose patience with me. That autumn he informed me that unless I went away for a rest cure I would go to pieces altogether. Capri was too hot; Switzerland was the place for me. Three days later I arrived in Zermatt and set to work to find out whether life above the snow line was more cheerful than below it. The ice-axe became a new toy to play with in the old game between Life and Death.

The ascent of Mont Blanc, winter and summer, is comparatively easy; but in the autumn the king of the Alps relies for his defence against intruders on frequent avalanches of fresh snow. One day that autumn all the foreigners in the hotels of Chamonix were looking through their telescopes at the three flies crawling about on the white cap that covered the head of the old mountain king. My guides and I groped our way through the snow under Mont Maudit, soon to appear again in their telescopes on the Grand Plateau. Nobody spoke, we knew that the very sound of the voice might start an avalanche. Suddenly the head guide, Boisson, pointed with his ice-axe to a black line drawn as by the hand of a giant across the white slope.

"We are lost," he murmured as the immense snowfield split in two and started the avalanche with a roar of thunder, hurling us down the slope with vertiginous speed. I felt nothing, I knew nothing. Then suddenly the pain in my skull roused in my brain, like a reflex action, the instinct of self-preservation. With a desperate effort I set to work to free myself from the snow under which I lay buried. Soon I saw the glistening walls of blue ice round me and the light of day above the crevasse into which I had been hurled. Benumbed, I felt no fear; I was aware only of my old curiosity to know all there was to know about Death. Then, all at once, I felt the ice-axe in my fingers, I felt the rope round my waist.

The rope! Where were my two companions? I pulled the rope, there was a jerk, the black-bearded head of Boisson popped out of the snow.

He drew a deep gasp, pulled the rope round his waist and dragged his half-dazed companion out of his grave. Boisson's eyes wandered round the walls of our prison and stopped, riveted to a bridge of ice spanning the crevasse like the flying buttress of a Gothic cathedral. "With an ice-axe, and using that bridge," he said, "I could cut our way out."

I handed him my ice-axe. Standing on my shoulders, he swung himself on to the ice bridge. Hanging on to the slanting walls with one hand, he cut his way step by step out of the crevasse and dragged me up with the rope. We hoisted up the other guide. The avalanche had swept away all landmarks; that we reached the hut on the Grand Plateau was, according to Boisson, even a greater miracle than getting out of the crevasse. The hut was almost buried under the snow, we had to break a hole through the roof to enter it. We fell headlong on the floor. Boisson rubbed my frozen feet with snow, after having cut off my mountain shoes.

The rescue party from Chamonix, having spent the whole morning searching for our bodies on the track of the avalanche, found us fast asleep on the floor of the hut. The next day I was taken in a hay cart to Geneva and put on the night express to Paris.

Professor Tillaux stood washing his hands between two operations as I staggered into the amphitheatre of Hôtel Dieu the next morning. As they unwrapped the cotton wool round my legs he stared at my feet. They were as black as those of a negro. "Confounded Swede, where the devil do you come from?" thundered the Professor, but he gave me an anxious look.

"He's the one," shouted an intern. Taking a newspaper from his pocket he read aloud a dispatch from Chamonix about the miraculous escape of a foreigner who, with two guides, had been carried away by an avalanche on Mont Blanc.

"Nom de nom de nom!" the Professor said. "Why take the long journey to Chamonix, why don't you just climb to the top of Notre Dame and throw yourself down in the square under our windows? Crazy Swede—go to Saint Anne's with the other fools!"

I was always delighted when the Professor chaffed me, it was a sign I was in his good graces. I had surely been his worst pupil; still, he had taught me enough of surgery to make me fear that he meant to amputate. But no. For five days he looked at my legs three times a day; but

on the sixth day I was at home, all danger over. I hobbled about on two sticks for another month. Then I was all right again.

I tremble at the thought of what would have happened to me had I fallen into the hands of one of the other leading surgeons in Paris in those days. Old Papa Richet would have made me die of gangrene or blood poisoning; it was his speciality, rampant all over his medieval clinic. The famous Professor Péan, the terrible butcher of Hôpital St. Louis, would have chopped off both my legs and thrown them on the heap of limbs on the floor of his amphitheatre. Then, his enormous hands still red with my blood, he would have plunged his knife into his next victim, half conscious under insufficient anaesthesia, while half a dozen others, screaming with terror on their stretchers, awaited their turn of torture.

La Salpêtrière



DURING THIS time I seldom failed to attend Professor Charcot's famous Tuesday lectures in the Salpêtrière, devoted to his theory of acute hysteria and to hypnotism. The huge amphitheatre was filled with all Paris: authors, journalists, actors and actresses, all morbidly curious to witness the startling phenomena of hypnotism. It was during one of these lectures that I became acquainted with Guy de Maupassant, already famous for his brilliant short stories. We used to have endless talks; he wanted to know everything about insanity, he was collecting materials for his terrible book *Le Horla,* a faithful picture of his own tragic future.

In 1891 I stayed as his guest for a couple of days on board his yacht. I remember our sitting up the whole night talking about death. He was afraid of death, he said the thought of it was seldom out of his mind. He had decided he wanted to die in the arms of a woman. I told him at the rate he was going he had a fair chance. As I spoke, his current mistress, Yvonne, woke up, asked half dazed for another glass of champagne and fell asleep again, her head on his lap. She was a ballet dancer, barely eighteen, now helplessly drifting to destruction with her terrible lover.

He was producing with feverish haste one masterpiece after another, slashing his excited brain with champagne, ether and drugs. Woman after woman in endless succession hastened the destruction: actresses, ballet dancers, midinettes. He was always hinting about mysterious ladies from high society admitted to his flat by his faithful valet François —the first symptom of his approaching delusions of grandeur.

One night I stood by his side backstage at the Grand Opéra watching Mademoiselle Yvonne dancing, smiling on the sly at her lover whose flaming eyes never left her. We had late supper in the elegant little flat Maupassant had taken for her. I was shocked to see how pale and worn she looked. She told me she always took ether when she was dancing, there was nothing like ether for a pick-me-up. Maupassant complained that she was too thin and that she kept him awake at night by her incessant coughing.

At his request I examined her the next morning; there was serious trouble in one lung. I told Maupassant she must have complete rest, I advised him to send her for the winter to Menton. Maupassant said he was willing to do all that could be done for her; besides he did not fancy thin women. She refused to go, she said she would rather die than leave him.

Yvonne had her first haemorrhage and trouble began in earnest. She drank bottles of cod-liver oil to get fat, but it was in vain; soon nothing remained of her fair youth but her wonderful eyes, lustrous with fever. Maupassant's purse remained open to her, but his arms soon closed round the body of one of her comrades. Yvonne threw a bottle of vitriol at the face of her rival, luckily she missed her. She escaped with two months imprisonment thanks to Maupassant's influence and to a certificate from me that she had only a few months to live.

Once out of prison she refused to return to her flat in spite of Maupassant's entreaties. She vanished into the vast unknown of the immense city like a doomed animal hiding to die. I found her by mere accident in a bed at St. Lazare—the end of the line for the fallen and forlorn women of Paris. I told her I would let Maupassant know, I felt sure he would come to see her at once. I called at his house that afternoon, there was no time to lose. The faithful François said no visitor was to be admitted under any circumstances. All I could do was to scribble a note which François promised to deliver at once; since François

always tried to protect his master, Maupassant probably never got the message. When I came to St. Lazare the next day, Yvonne was dead. The nun told me she had spent the whole morning putting rouge on her face and arranging her hair, she had even borrowed from an old prostitute in the next bed a red silk shawl, last vestige of past splendour, to cover her emaciated shoulders. She told the nun she was expecting her Monsieur, she waited eagerly the whole day but he never came. In the morning they found her dead, she had swallowed to the last drop her portion of chloral.

Two months later I saw Guy de Maupassant in the garden of an asylum. He was walking about on the arm of François, throwing small pebbles on the flower beds.

"Look, look," he said, "they will all come up as little Maupassants in the spring."

To me the public demonstrations of hypnotism staged at the Salpêtrière were a farce, a hopeless muddle of truth and cheating. Some of the subjects were real somnambulists faithfully carrying out in a waking state the various suggestions made to them during hypnosis. Many of them were frauds, delighted to perform their tricks in public, cheating both doctors and audience with the amazing cunning of the hysteric. They were always ready to throw a fit of Charcot's classical *grande hystérie,* their bodies arched in convulsion, or to exhibit his famous three stages of hypnotism: lethargy, catalepsy, somnambulism, all invented by the Master and hardly ever observed outside the Salpêtrière. Some of them smelt with delight a bottle of ammonia when told it was rose water, others would crawl on all fours on the floor, barking furiously, when told they were dogs.

Hypnotized dozens of times a day, by doctors and students, many unfortunate girls spent their days in a state of semi-trance, their brains bewildered by all sorts of absurd suggestions, sooner or later doomed to end their days in a lunatic asylum.

While these Tuesday performances in the amphitheatre were unscientific, it would be unfair not to admit that serious work was done in the wards on the still obscure phenomena of hypnotism. But visits to Professor Bernheim's famous clinic in Nancy had already opened my eyes to Charcot's fallacies. His theories on hypnotism, imposed by the

sheer weight of his authority on a whole generation of doctors, have long since fallen into discredit; but they retarded our knowledge of its true nature for years.

One Sunday as I was leaving the Salpêtrière I came upon a pair of old peasants sitting on a bench under the plane trees in the inner court. They smelt of the country, the fields and the cowhouse, it did my heart good to look at them. The old man in his long blue blouse lifted his hand to his beret, the old woman in her white *coiffe* curtsied to me with a friendly smile. They said they had come from Normandy to visit their daughter who had been a kitchen maid in the Salpêtrière for two years. It was a very good job, but there was lots to do on the farm, they had three cows and six pigs and they had come to take their daughter home; they were getting too old to work the farm alone. Would I be so kind as to show them where the kitchen was? I said they had to cross three courts and pass through endless corridors, I had better take them there myself.

We trotted off, and the old woman produced from her basket a cream cheese she had made for Geneviève; she would be very pleased if I would accept it.

How old was Geneviève?

She was just twenty.

Was she fair and very good-looking?

"Her father says she looks exactly like me."

"Are you sure she is working in the kitchen?" I asked with an involuntary shudder.

The old man fumbled in his blouse pocket and produced a letter. I recognized the curiously twisted yet remarkably neat handwriting, gradually improved during hundreds of experiences in automatic handwriting, even under my own supervision.

"This way," I said taking them straight to the ward of the hysterics.

GENEVIÈVE was sitting dangling her silk-stockinged legs from the long table in the middle of the ward, a magazine in her lap with her own portrait on the title page. Her coquettishly arranged hair was adorned with a blue silk ribbon, a row of pearls hung round her neck, her face was painted. She looked like a midinette off for a stroll on the boulevards. She was the prima donna of Charcot's Tuesday stage

exhibitions, spoiled and petted, very pleased with herself and her surroundings.

The two old peasants stared bewildered at their daughter. Geneviève looked back at them with an indifferent, silly air; then suddenly her face began to twitch and with a piercing scream she fell headlong on the floor in convulsions. Obeying the law of imitation a couple of other hysterics started to work up attacks from their beds, one in convulsive laughter, one in a flood of tears.

The two old folks, speechless with terror, were pushed out of the ward by the nuns. I took them to the bench under the plane trees. They were too frightened even to cry. How their daughter had landed in the hysterics' ward from the kitchen I did not know. I spoke to them as gently as I could, urged them to return to their village, and promised that their daughter would be sent home as soon as possible. Finally I succeeded in putting them in a cab to catch the next train.

The thought of the two old peasants kept me awake the whole night. How was I to keep my promise? I had written an article about Bernheim's methods which had annoyed Charcot; I could not speak to him about Geneviève, and I knew that she would never consent to return to her humble home of her own free will. I could see only one solution, to conquer that will of hers and replace it by my own. Geneviève had been trained to carry out post-hypnotic suggestions with the fatality of a falling stone, and with complete ignorance, in her waking state, of what she had been told to do.

I applied to the chief of the clinic to carry out some experiments in telepathy with Geneviève. He wished me luck.

The first day I suggested to her under deep hypnosis that she stay in bed the following Tuesday instead of going to the amphitheatre, that she disliked her life in the Salpêtrière and wished to return to her parents. For a week I repeated these suggestions to her with no result. The following week she was absent during the Tuesday performance. I was told she had a cold. A couple of days later I found her with a railway guide in her hands; she put it in her pocket as soon as she saw me, a sign that I could rely on her amnesia. Two days later I ordered her to leave her ward at twelve o'clock the next day while the nuns were distributing the midday meal, to slip out of the porter's lodge while he was having his luncheon, jump into a cab and drive straight to Avenue

de Villiers. On returning home I found her sitting in my waiting-room. She looked embarrassed and muttered something about coming to see my dogs and the monkey I had told her about.

The success of this experiment made me decide to carry out my plan at once. I ordered Geneviève to come to Avenue de Villiers at one o'clock two days later.

I invited Norstrom for luncheon, I wanted him there as a witness. When I told him of my plan, he warned me of the serious consequences it might have.

The grandfather clock in the hall chimed a quarter to one. The front bell rang and I let in Miss Anderssen, the nurse I had ordered to be there to take Geneviève home on the train. I had given her a letter to the village curé explaining the situation and begging him to prevent Geneviève's return to Paris.

I sat down at the table again, smoking furiously.

"I wish you could chuck all this nonsense about hypnotism," said Norstrom.

The clock struck half past one.

"Failure," said Norstrom phlegmatically, "and so much the better for both of us."

I did not close my eyes that night. What had happened?

I felt sick as I entered the amphitheatre of the Salpêtrière the next morning. Charcot had already begun his Tuesday lecture but Geneviève was not in her usual place on the platform. I slipped out of the room and went up to the hysterics' ward. An intern told me he had been summoned from his luncheon yesterday and found Geneviève in a state of cataleptic coma interrupted by the most violent convulsions he had ever seen. One of the nuns had met her outside the hospital as she was jumping into a cab. The nun had brought her back to the porter's lodge with great difficulty and had her carried to her ward. All night she had fought like a wild animal trying to escape from its cage, they had had to put her into a strait-jacket. She was now in a separate room with a heavy dose of bromide. Charcot himself had visited her and succeeded after much effort in putting her to sleep.

We were interrupted by the head of the clinic who told me Charcot wished to speak to me.

I entered the sanctuary of the Master for the last time in my life.

Charcot sat in his chair by the table, bent over the microscope. He raised his head and flashed his terrible eyes on me. Speaking slowly, his deep voice trembling with rage, he said I had tried to lure to my house an inmate of his hospital, an unstable young girl, half unconscious of her acts. According to her own confession she had already been once to my house, my diabolical plan to take advantage of her a second time had miscarried by a mere accident. He ought to hand me over to the police, but for the honour of the profession and the ribbon of the Legion of Honour in my buttonhole he would let me off by turning me out of the hospital. He wished never to set eyes on me again.

As I realized the meaning of his abominable accusation, all fear left me.

I answered angrily that it was he and his followers who had brought ruin to this girl who had entered the hospital a healthy peasant girl and would probably leave it a lunatic. I had adopted the one course open to me to return her to her parents.

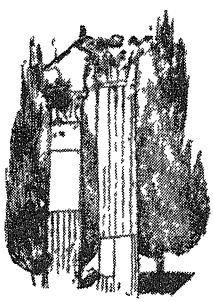
"Enough, sir!" he shouted.

He told the *chef de clinique* to accompany me to the porter's lodge with orders to refuse to let me enter the hospital again.

I SMARTED under the humiliation of my disgrace. An acute attack of insomnia set in, so terrible that it nearly made me go off my head. Insomnia does not kill its man unless he kills himself—sleeplessness is the most common cause of suicide. But it kills his *joie de vivre,* sucks the blood from his brain and heart. Voltaire was right when he placed sleep on the same level as hope.

Norstrom was worried about me. Our position had now changed; he was ascending the slippery ladder of success, I was descending. He had done a lot of Swedish massage, and I recommended him to the Duc d'Aumale, who suffered from sciatica. The Duc made a marvellous recovery. He was followed by two Russian Grand Dukes, the Spanish Infanta and an American Vanderbilt, and now Norstrom's consulting-room was crammed with patients. Success made him kinder than ever. He wanted me to go to Capri for a thorough rest, he felt sure I would return to my work all right again. I said, if I went now, I would never return to the artificial life of Paris. He smiled and I said, "I will prove it to you."

The Miracle of Sant' Antonio



SANT'ANTONIO had done another miracle. I was living in a little peasant house in Anacapri, whitewashed and clean, with a sunny pergola outside the open windows. Old Maria Porta-Lettere, La Bella Margherita, Annarella and Gioconda were all delighted to see me back.

From sunrise till sunset I was hard at work in what had been Mastro Vincenzo's garden, digging the foundations of the huge arches of the loggia outside my future home. Mastro Nicola and his three sons dug by my side and half a dozen girls with laughing eyes and swinging hips carried away the earth in huge baskets on their heads.

A yard below the surface we had come upon Roman walls, with nymphs and bacchantes dancing on a background of Pompeian red. Below appeared a mosaic floor framed with black marble vine leaves. A fluted column of veined marble lay across the pavement where it had fallen two thousand years ago, crushing in its fall a big vase of Parian marble, the lion-headed handle of which is now lying on my table.

None of my fellow workers could read or write. None had ever worked at the building of any but peasant houses. Yet Mastro Nicola knew how to build an arch as did his father and his grandfather from untold generations; the Romans had been their masters. They were all tremendously interested, nobody knew what the villa was going to look like.

All we had to go by was a rough sketch drawn by myself with a piece of charcoal on the white garden wall.

"This is my house," I explained to them, "with huge Roman columns supporting its vaulted rooms, and small Gothic columns in the windows. This is the arched loggia, here a pergola of a hundred columns leading up to the chapel with an avenue of cypresses. Here is a small inner court, all white marble, with a fountain in its midst and heads of Roman emperors in niches round the walls. Out here comes a large terrace where all you girls will dance the tarantella. We will rebuild the chapel

for my library with cloister stalls and stained-glass windows. And here looking out over the Bay of Naples we will put an enormous Egyptian sphinx of red granite. I do not know where I shall get it but it will turn up."

The arcades of the big loggia rose rapidly; one by one the hundred white columns of the pergola stood out against the sky. It was all done by eye.

My friend the Swedish Minister in Rome came to spend Easter with me, full of admiration for what we had done. When he looked down from the chapel on the fair island at his feet he said he believed it was the most beautiful view in the world. He said he was glad I was a rich man; surely it needed a fortune to build the loggias, pergolas and cloisters and the Greek theatre.

I opened the drawer of my table and showed him a small bundle of bank notes tucked in a stocking: it was all I possessed after twelve years hard work in Paris.

"Listen, incorrigible dreamer, to the voice of a friend," he said. "The trouble of your ex-patients in the Salpêtrière is evidently catching." He tapped his forehead. "At this rate, your stocking will be empty in a month, and I see nothing but half-finished columns. How are you going to build your house?"

"With my hands."

"And then, what will you live on?"

"Macaroni."

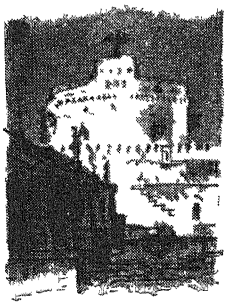
"It will cost at least half a million to build your San Michele as you see it in your imagination. Where are you going to get the money from?"

Dumbfounded, I stared at my friend.

"I will tell you what you are to do," he said. "You are to go to Rome to take up your work as a doctor. You need only spend the winters there, you can go on with your building. There are forty-four foreign doctors practising in Rome; you can beat them all with your left hand. If you work hard and give me your earnings to invest, in five years you will have enough money to finish San Michele and live happily the rest of your life."

Two weeks later I was established as a doctor in the house the poet Keats had once occupied in Rome.

Rome: Piazza di Spagna



My very first patient was the wife of a well-known English banker in Rome. She had been on her back for nearly three years after a fall from her horse. All the foreign doctors in Rome had attended her in turn. As soon as I examined her, I knew that the Swedish Minister was right. Once more, fortune stood by my side. It was the shock, and no permanent injury to her spine, that had paralysed her. Faith and massage put her on her legs in a couple of months.

This case opened the doors of every house in the British colony and I became doctor to the British Embassy. Professor Weir-Mitchell, the leading nerve specialist of America, whom I had known in Paris, again sent me his surplus of dilapidated millionaires and their unstrung wives. Their exuberant daughters who had invested their vanity in the first available Roman prince also began to send for me in their sombre old palaces to consult me about their symptoms of disillusion.

All the flower sellers of Piazzi di Spagna were patients of mine. They threw bunches of violets into my carriage as I drove past in exchange for a cough mixture for their innumerable babies. My dispensary in the poor quarters of Rome spread my fame. I was on my legs from morning till night but I slept well; I never knew what fatigue meant in those days.

I drove about Rome full speed in a smart red-wheeled victoria drawn by a pair of splendid Hungarian horses, my faithful Lappland dog Tappio seated by my side. I can now see that it was maybe a little showy.

Soon it became difficult for any foreigner in Rome to die without my being called in to see him through. A person who never failed to turn up on these occasions was Signor Cornacchia, undertaker to the foreign colony. His big hook nose seemed to smell the dead at a distance like a vulture.

One day I received a visit from old Doctor Pilkington, the doyen of the foreign doctors in Rome. He invited me to become a member of

their Society for Mutual Protection. The thorny question of professional fees had been settled among them by an agreement fixing the minimum fee for consultation at twenty lire, maximum fee at discretion, with no embalmment for less than five thousand lire. He was sorry to have to tell me that the Society had received complaints that I was careless in collecting fees, and sometimes took no fee at all. And Signor Cornacchia had confided to him that I had embalmed the wife of the Swedish parson for a hundred lire, a deplorable breach of loyalty to my colleagues. He felt sure I would realize the advantages to myself of becoming a member of their Society.

I answered that I was sorry I could not see the advantage. I was willing to discuss the fixing of a maximum fee but not of a minimum fee. As to the injections of sublimate they called embalmment, its cost did not exceed fifty lire. Adding another fifty for the loss of time, the sum I had charged was correct. I earned from the living, not from the dead. I was a doctor, not a hyena.

He rose from his seat at the word hyena with a request never to call him in consultation, he would not be available.

MY HOPE to have done with neurotic women when I left Paris had not been fulfilled, my consulting-room in the Piazzi di Spagna was full of undisciplined and unhinged ladies of all ages. Some were nothing less than lunatics.

It is easy to be patient with lunatics; with a little kindness one comes to terms with them as often as not. But it is not easy to be patient with hysterical women, and as to being kind to them, one had better think twice. They remain a bewildering complex of mental and physical disorders, a plague to themselves and to their families, a curse to their doctors. They are too willing to be influenced by their doctor, to imagine he is the only one who can understand them, to hero-worship him. Sooner or later they begin to bring him photographs.

I have never taken any interest even in the photographs of my friends, I can at will reproduce their unretouched features on my retina. But old Anna, my peasant receptionist, was tremendously interested in photographs.

From the day I promoted her from the humblest of the flower sellers in Piazzi di Spagna to open the door in Keats's house, Anna

became a keen collector of photographs. When I left Rome for good, she grabbed a drawerful of them.

I was glad to get rid of them; but on a visit to London and Paris the following spring, I was struck by the coolness of several of my former patients.

In passing through Rome on my return journey to Capri I dined at the Swedish Legation. The Minister seemed sulky, my charming hostess was unusually silent. As I was leaving for the station to catch the night train to Naples, my old friend told me it was high time I returned to San Michele and my dogs and monkeys. I was not fit for any other society after my last performance when leaving Keats's house. Furiously he went on to tell me that on Christmas Eve, while passing through Piazzi di Spagna, thronged with tourists as usual, he had come upon Anna in front of Keats's house with a table full of photographs, yelling to the passers-by in a shrill voice:

"Come see this beautiful lady with curly hair; two lire!

"See the American lady, see that pearl necklace, these diamond earrings! I'll give it away at two fifty.

"See Signora Redhead, who always stank of drink, only one and a half lire, a gift!

"Here's a lady who was mad for the doctor! Two and a half.

"See the lady who stole his cigarette case, poor lady, it wasn't her fault, she had a screw loose! Only one lira."

In the midst of all the ladies was the Minister's picture, in full-dress uniform and decorations, and in the corner: "To A.M. from his old friend C.B." Anna said she would part with it at the reduced price of one lira as she was dealing chiefly in ladies.

The Legation had received heaps of letters from former patients, their husbands and sweethearts, protesting this scandal. An infuriated Frenchman on his honeymoon in Rome had discovered a large photo of his bride in a barber's shop. He was going to challenge me to a duel with pistols at the frontier. The Minister hoped that the Frenchman was a good shot. . . .

But this was not the greatest risk I incurred from my neurotic patients. To gain time, some of them were admitted to the dining-room to tell me their tales of woe while I was having luncheon. The dining-room opened on a courtyard transformed by me into a convalescent home for

my various animals. Among them was a little owl. I had found it in the Campagna with a broken wing. When its wing healed, I twice took it back where I had found it and set it free; twice it had flown back to my carriage to perch on my shoulder, it would not hear of our parting. Since then the little owl sat on a perch in the corner of the dining-room, looking lovingly at me with her golden eyes. She had even given up sleeping in the day in order not to lose sight of me. When I used to stroke her she would half close her eyes with delight and nibble at my lips with her tiny, sharp beak.

Among the patients admitted to the dining-room was a very excitable young Russian lady who was giving me lots of trouble. This lady got jealous of the owl; she used to glare at the little bird so savagely that I gave orders to Anna never to leave the two alone in the room. One day at lunch Anna told me that the Russian lady had called with a dead mouse wrapped in paper. She had caught it in her room, she felt sure the owl would like it for breakfast.

The owl knew better; after having bitten off its head, owl fashion, she refused to eat it. I took it to the chemist, it contained enough arsenic to kill a cat.

I had brought Giovannina and Rosina of the San Michele household to Rome, and to give them a treat I invited their old father to spend Easter with us. Pacciale had been a particular friend of mine for many years.

In his early days he had been a coral fisher and had ended by becoming the gravedigger of Anacapri, a bad job in a place where nobody dies as long as he keeps clear of the doctor. Even after I had established him and his children in San Michele he would not hear of giving up his job. He had a peculiar liking for dead people, he enjoyed burying them.

He arrived on Easter Thursday in a state of complete bewilderment. He had never travelled on the railway before, had never been in a town or sat in a carriage. After having been taken by his children to kiss the bronze toe of St. Peter and later to inspect the cemeteries of Rome, he said he would not see anything more. He spent the rest of his time seated by the window overlooking the piazza, in his long fisherman's cap of Phrygian cut. He said it was the finest view in Rome, nothing could beat Piazza di Spagna. I asked him why.

"Because there are always funerals passing," explained old Pacciale.

Messina, Sicily



THE MESSINA medal was bestowed on me by the Italian Government for something I was supposed to have done during the earthquake there. But what I did was very little compared with what I saw hundreds of unnamed people do at the peril of their lives. I was in no peril except that of dying from hunger and from my own stupidity. I brought a number of half-suffocated people back to life by artificial respiration, but there are few nurses or coast-guards who have not done the same. I dragged an old woman from what had been her kitchen, but I abandoned her in the street screaming for help, her legs broken. There was nothing else to do, until the first hospital ship brought dressings and medicine. I found a naked baby in a courtyard. I took it to my cellar where it slept peacefully the whole night, tucked under my coat, now and then sucking my thumb in its sleep. In the morning I took it to the nuns of St. Teresa in what remained of their chapel where already over a dozen babies were lying on the floor screaming with hunger—for a whole week not a drop of milk could be found in Messina. I always marvelled at the number of unhurt babies picked out of the ruins or found in the streets, it almost looked as if God had shown more pity to them than to the adults.

The aqueduct having been broken, there was no water except from a few stinking wells, polluted by the thousands of putrefied bodies in town. No bread, no meat, hardly any macaroni, no vegetables, no fish. Most of the fishing boats had been swamped or smashed by the tidal wave which swept over the beach, carrying away over a thousand people. Hundreds of them were hurled back on the sand, where they lay rotting in the sun. The biggest shark I have ever seen was thrown up on the sand still alive. I watched with hungry eyes when he was being cut open, hoping to snatch a slice for myself. In his belly was the leg of a woman in a red stocking and a thick boot, amputated as by a surgeon's knife. It is quite possible that there were other than sharks that tasted human flesh during those days, the less said about it the

better. Of course the thousands of homeless dogs and cats, sneaking about the ruins during the night, lived on nothing else, until they were caught and devoured by the living. I myself have roasted a cat over my spirit lamp.

Luckily there were plenty of oranges, lemons and mandarins in the gardens. Wine was plentiful, the looting of the wine cellars and shops began the very first day. Wine was a blessing, it took away the fainting sensation of hunger, and few people would have dared to fall asleep had they been sober. Shocks occurred almost every night, followed by the roar of falling houses and renewed screams of terror. The cellars were the safest place to sleep if one could overcome the fear of being trapped by a falling wall. Better still was to sleep under a tree in an orange grove but after two days of torrrential rain the nights became too cold. People saved in their nightshirts were maddened by terror, hunger and cold.

That robbery, assaults, murders occurred frequently before the troops arrived is not to be wondered at. To make matters worse, the first shock had opened the cells for more than four hundred murderers and thieves in the prison. These jail-birds, after having looted the shops for clothes and revolvers, had a good time in what remained of the rich city. They even broke open the safe of the Bank of Naples, killing two night watchmen. I was never molested by anybody, on the contrary they were all kind and helpful to me as they were to each other. Those who had got hold of clothing or food were glad to share it with those who had not. I was presented by an unknown shoplifter with a lady's quilted dressing-gown, one of the most welcome presents I have ever received.

One evening, passing by the ruins of a *palazzo,* I noticed a well-dressed man throwing carrots to two horses and a little donkey imprisoned in an underground stable, I could just see the doomed animals through a chink in the wall. He told me he came there twice a day with whatever scraps of food he could get hold of; the sight of these poor animals dying of hunger and thirst was so painful to him that he would shoot them if only he had the courage, but he had never had the courage to shoot any animal, not even a quail. It might interest animal lovers to know that they were got out alive on the seventeenth day after the earthquake.

The man, who said he was Signor Amedeo, asked me where I was

living and, when I answered nowhere in particular, offered to put me up for the night, he was living with two friends close by. We groped our way among huge blocks of masonry and piles of smashed furniture, descended a flight of steps and stood in a large underground kitchen dimly lit by an oil-lamp under a colour print of the Madonna. There were three mattresses on the floor, Signor Amedeo said I was welcome to sleep on his, he and his friends were to be away the whole night to search for some of their belongings under the ruins of their houses. I slept soundly on Amedeo's mattress, to be awakened in the morning by the safe return of my host and his two friends from their perilous expedition—troops were ordered to shoot at sight any person attempting to carry anything away, even from the ruins of his own house. They flung their bundles under the table and themselves on their mattresses and were all fast asleep when I left. My host had told me that I was welcome to stay with him as long as I liked, and I asked for nothing better. A kinder man than Signor Amedeo I never saw. When he heard I was out of cash, he offered to lend me five hundred lire, I regret to say I owe him still. I expressed surprise that he would lend money to a stranger. He answered with a smile that I would not be there if he did not trust me.

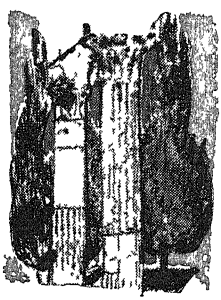
The following afternoon as I was crawling among the ruins of a hotel in search of the corpse of the Swedish Consul, I was suddenly confronted with a soldier pointing his rifle at me. I was arrested and taken to the nearest post. Having scrutinized my permit the officer in charge let me off but I noticed his puzzled look when I told him I did not know the name of the street my host lived in. It was already dark, soon I started running, for I imagined I heard stealthy footsteps following me, but I reached my sleeping quarters without further adventures. Amedeo and his two friends were asleep. I sat down to the supper my host had left for me on the table. I meant to keep awake till they were about to start, and offer to help Amedeo search for his belongings, it was the least I could do in return for his kindness.

Suddenly I heard a sharp whistle and the sound of footsteps on the stairs. The three sleeping men sprang to their feet. I heard a shot, a *carabiniere* fell headlong down the stairs. I bent over him to see if he was dead, the same instant the room was full of soldiers. I heard another shot, after a desperate struggle the three men were overpowered. As my

host passed before me, handcuffed, with a stout rope tied round his arms and legs, he raised his head and looked at me with a wild flash of hatred and reproach that made the blood freeze in my veins. Half an hour later I was back again at the post, where I was locked up for the night. In the morning I was interrogated by the same officer. He told me the three men were escaped prisoners on life sentence. Amedeo was a famous bandit who had terrorized the country round Girgenti for years with a record of eight homicides. It was his gang who had killed the bank watchmen. The three men had been shot at daybreak. They had asked for a priest, confessed their sins and died fearlessly.

Unfortunately my adventure reached the ears of some newspaper correspondents and the story was published. I was informed by those who knew the long arm of the Mafia that I would be murdered if I remained in Sicily. Next day, I returned to Rome.

Home Again



ANOTHER SPRING had come and gone in Rome, it was getting on towards summer. Giovannina and Rosina were looking pale, the dogs were panting, the monkeys yelling for change of air. My beautiful little cutter was riding at anchor off Porto d'Anzio, waiting for the signal to hoist sail for my island home. Giovannina, Rosina and the dogs went by rail to Naples. I with my pet baboon, Billy, the mongoose and the little owl had a glorious sail in the yacht. Next day, as the bells were ringing midday, I was at work in the garden of San Michele.

After five summers incessant toil San Michele was more or less finished. I thought it looked beautiful. The house was small, the rooms few; but there were loggias, terraces and pergolas all round it from which to watch the sun, the sea, the clouds—the soul needs more space than the body. Not much furniture in the rooms but nothing unbeautiful, no bric-à-brac, no trinkets. A few pictures, an etching of Dürer and a Greek bas-relief on the whitewashed walls. A couple of old rugs on the mosaic floor, a few books on the tables, flowers everywhere in lustrous jars.



The cypresses leading to the chapel formed an avenue of stately trees, the noblest trees in the world. Over the writing table in the chapel, now my library, a marble head of Medusa looked down upon me. On a column by the window the mutilated head of Nero looked out over the gulf where he had caused his mother to be beaten to death by his oarsmen. In a small crypt five feet below the Roman floor of coloured marble slept in peace two monks I had come upon when we were digging for the foundations of the mantelpiece. They lay there with folded arms just as they had been buried under their chapel nearly five hundred years ago. Their cassocks had mouldered almost to dust, their dried-up bodies were light as parchment, but their features were well preserved, their hands were still clasping their crucifixes, one of them wore dainty silver buckles on his shoes. I was sorry to have disturbed them in their sleep; with infinite precautions I laid them back in their little crypt.

The lofty archway with Gothic columns outside the chapel looked just right, I thought. Looking down from the parapet on the island at my feet, I told Mastro Nicola that we were to begin at once the emplacement for the sphinx, there was no time to lose. Why didn't we fetch it at once, he said; where was it? I said it was lying under the ruins of the forgotten villa of a Roman emperor somewhere on the mainland, waiting for me.

In the little marble court outside the dining-room sat Billy the baboon, hard at work catching my dog Tappio's fleas. Billy had once belonged to a doctor who was fond of whisky, and had been something of an alcoholic himself. Now he had given up drinking and become a respectable monkey in the full bloom of manhood, alarmingly like a human being, on the whole well behaved though somewhat boisterous when I was out of sight. I often wondered what the dogs really thought of him;

I am not sure they were not afraid of him, they generally turned their heads away when he looked at them. Billy was afraid of nobody but me. I could always see by his face when he had a bad conscience, which was generally the case.

Billy had taken a great liking to Elisa, the wife of my gardener, Baldassare; she stood for hours staring at him with fascinated eyes. Since she was expecting a baby—as usual—I did not quite like this sudden friendship. I told her she had better look at somebody else.

When the bells in the chapel rang Ave Maria I sat down to my frugal supper; then, grateful for another happy day, I went to bed. Hardly had I fallen asleep than I found myself standing on a lonely plain strewn with broken masonry, travertine and marbles, half hidden by ivy, rosemary, honeysuckle and thyme. On a crumbling wall sat an old shepherd playing on a flute to his flock of goats. His wild, bearded face was scorched by sun and wind, his eyes were burning like fire under his bushy eyebrows. I offered him tobacco; he handed me a slice of fresh goat cheese and an onion.

What was the name of this strange place?

It had no name.

Where did he come from?

He had always been here, this was his home.

Where did he sleep?

He pointed with his staff to a flight of steps under a tumbledown archway. I climbed down the steps with him and stood in a dim, vaulted room. In the corner a straw mattress with a couple of sheepskins as bedcover. Suspended from the ceiling bunches of onions; an earthenware jug of water on the rough table. In front of me opened a subterranean passage half filled with debris from the fallen roof. Where did it lead to?

He had been told that it led to a cave haunted by an evil spirit who had lived there for thousands of years, in the shape of a huge werewolf who would devour any man who approached his cave.

I lit a torch and groped my way down the passage. It widened more and more, an ice-cold blast of air blew in my face. Suddenly I stood in a large hall. Two huge columns of African marble still supported a part of the vaulted roof, two others lay across the mosaic floor, wrenched from their pedestals by an earthquake. Hundreds of big bats hung in

black clusters round the walls, others fluttered in wild flight round my head, blinded by the light of the torch. In the midst of the hall crouched a granite sphinx, staring at me with stony, wide-open eyes. . . .

I opened my eyes, the day was breaking. I sprang to my feet, and rushed up to the parapet of the chapel to hoist the signal to the yacht to make ready. A couple of hours later I boarded my boat with provisions for a week, coils of stout rope, pickaxes and spades, a revolver, all my available money, a bundle of torches of resinous wood, such as fishermen use for night fishing. A moment later we hoisted sail and the following night we dropped anchor in a lonely cove, unknown to all but a few fishermen and smugglers. The yacht would wait for me for a week, ready to run for shelter to the nearest port in case bad weather set in, for this dangerous coast had no safe anchorage for a hundred miles. Its wonderful inland, once the Magna Graecia of the Golden Ages of Hellenic art and culture, was now the most desolate province of Italy, abandoned by man to malaria and earthquake.

Three days later I stood on the same lonely plain strewn with broken masonry, travertine and marbles, half hidden under ivy, rosemary, honeysuckle and thyme. On the crumbling wall sat the old shepherd playing to his flock of goats. I offered him tobacco, he handed me a slice of goat cheese and an onion. The sun had already gone down behind the mountains, the deadly mist of malaria was slowly creeping over the desolate plain. I told him I had lost my way, might I stay with him for the night?

He led me to his underground quarters I knew so well from my dream. I lay down on his sheepskins and fell asleep. Who steered the yacht into this lonely cove? Who led my way across this wilderness to the ruins of Nero's villa? You must ask the granite sphinx who now crouches on the parapet of San Michele. She has kept her own secret for five thousand years. She will keep mine.

On the way home we were caught in a southwesterly gale and would have gone to the bottom with our heavy cargo had not Sant'Antonio taken the helm in the nick of time. Votive candles were burning before his shrine in the church of Anacapri when I entered San Michele, and my household was overjoyed to welcome me home.

Yes, all was well at San Michele, *grazie a Dio*. The *parroco* had sprained his ankle, some said the *parroco* of Capri had made him do it,

he had the evil eye. Yesterday, Canon Don Giacinto had been found dead in his bed down in Capri. He was lying in state before the High Altar and was to be buried this morning.

The dogs had had their baths and their bones according to the regulations. The little owl and the mongoose were in good spirits. The tortoises seemed happy in their quiet way.

Had Billy been good?

Yes, Elisa hurried to answer, Billy had been a true angel.

I thought he did not look like one as I watched him grinning at me from the top of his fig tree. Contrary to his habit he did not come down to greet me. I did not like the look of his face.

Gradually the truth came out. The day I sailed Billy had thrown a carrot at the head of a foreigner who was passing under the garden wall and smashed his eyeglass. The next day there had been a terrible fight between Billy and the fox terrier, all the dogs had thrown themselves into the fray, Billy had fought like *il Demonio*. He and the dogs had been at daggers drawn ever since, he had even refused to catch their fleas. Billy had been teasing the tortoises. Amanda, the biggest tortoise, had laid seven eggs to be hatched by the sun and Billy had gulped them down.

Then there was an ominous pause. Pacciale, the most trustworthy of the household, admitted at last that Billy had been seen sneaking out of the wine cellar with a bottle in each hand. Later the bottles had been discovered in the monkey house, carefully buried under the sand. According to instructions, Billy had been locked up on water and bread, but next morning the monkey house had been found empty; the bars were intact, the key to the padlock in Baldassare's pocket. The whole household had been hunting for Billy. Baldassare had caught him at last high on the mountain of Barbarossa, fast asleep, with a dead bird in his hand.

Billy was now sitting at the top of his tree looking defiantly at me, there could be no doubt that he understood every word we said. Stern disciplinary measures were necessary. Billy was beginning to look uneasy, he knew that the whip in my hand was for him. The dogs knew it equally well. They sat in a circle round Billy's tree wagging their tails —dogs rather like to assist at the whipping of somebody else. Suddenly Elisa put her hands over her abdomen with a piercing scream and was

dragged to her bed in the cottage by Pacciale and me while Baldassare rushed to fetch the midwife. When I returned to his tree Billy had vanished. So much the better, I hate to punish animals.

Meantime, I was anxious to know something more about Don Giacinto's death. He had the reputation of being the richest man on the island. I had watched him for years squeezing the last penny out of his poor tenants, evicting them when the olives had failed and they could not pay their rent, leaving them to starve when they were old and had no more strength to toil for him. I would cease to believe in any divine justice on this side of the grave if Almighty God had bestowed upon this old bloodsucker the greatest blessing he can bestow upon any living man—to die in his sleep. I decided to go and see my friend the *parroco,* Don Antonio. He was sitting up in his bed, his sprained ankle wrapped in an enormous bundle of blankets, his face beaming. The room was full of priests. In their midst stood Maria Porta-Lettere, her tongue almost dropping out of her mouth with excitement: during the night fire had broken out in the church of San Costanzo, where Don Giacinto was lying in state; the coffin had been consumed by the flames! Some people said it was *il Demonio* who had knocked down the wax candelabra to set Don Giacinto on fire. Others said that it had been done by a band of brigands who had come to steal the silver statue of San Costanzo.

I went down to Capri to investigate the matter. The piazza was packed with people all screaming at the top of their voices. In their midst stood the mayor and council awaiting the arrival of the *carabinieri* from Sorrento. Meantime, the church was closed, but I learned that Don Giacinto's catafalque was half consumed by the fire, the coffin badly scorched, the precious pall of embroidered velvet and wreaths from his relatives in ashes.

I continued my investigations. In a near-by café the floor was strewn with broken glasses and bottles, on a table stood a half-empty bottle of whisky. In the pharmacy dozens of Faenza jars with precious drugs had been hurled from their shelves, castor oil everywhere. The local artist showed me the devastation of his new exhibition room. His "Eruption of Vesuvius," his "Procession of San Costanzo" lay on the floor, their frames broken, their canvases split. His "Tiberius Swimming in the Blue Grotto" still stood on the easel, splashed with patches

of ultramarine in mad confusion. Who were the perpetrators of these dastardly outrages? There remained one hypothesis, the mayor told me. Anacapri! Don Giacinto was the deadly enemy of the Anacapresi who had never forgiven him for having scoffed at a miracle of Sant'Antonio in his sermons. *Abbasso Anacapri!* Down with Anacapri!

I was beginning to feel very uneasy. The bitter war between Capri and Anacapri had been raging since the times of the Spanish viceroys in Naples. The peasants hated each other, the notables hated each other, the priests hated each other, the two patron saints, Sant'Antonio and San Costanzo, hated each other.

I returned home. In the pergola sat Billy by the side of the biggest tortoise, too absorbed in his favourite game to notice me. The game consisted in a series of rapid knocks at the back door of the tortoise where the tail comes out. At each knock the tortoise would pop its sleepy head from the front door, only to receive a stunning blow on the nose from Billy's fist. This game was forbidden. Billy knew it, and screamed like a child when, for once quicker than he, I got hold of the strap round his stomach.

"Billy," said I sternly, "I am going to have a private conversation with you under your fig tree. It is no good smacking your lips at me, you know that you deserve a spanking and that you are going to get it. Billy, you have been drinking again! You have smashed the eyeglass of a foreigner. You have fought with the dogs, you have boxed the ears of the tortoise. Last, not least, you have broken away from the premises in a state of intoxication. Cruelty to animals belongs to your nature or you would not be a candidate for humanity, but the Lords of Creation alone have the right to get drunk. You are a disreputable man-cub, a"

There was an awful silence. Putting on my spectacles better to look at Billy's ultramarine fingernails and scorched tail, I said at last: "Billy, I rather liked your retouches to 'Tiberius Swimming in the Blue Grotto.' Your sense of humour I guess you got from your father, who can be no other than the Devil himself. Tell me, Billy, was it you or your father who knocked down the candelabra and set the coffin on fire?"

ON EASTER SUNDAY, I would take my place at the door by the side of blind old Cecatiello, the official beggar of Anacapri. We both

stretched out our hands to the churchgoers, he for his halfpenny and I for the birds in the pockets of the men, in the folds of the black mantillas of the women, in the children's hands. The villagers accepted my interfering with their way of celebrating the Resurrection of Our Lord, consecrated by the tradition of nearly two thousand years. From the first day of Holy Week, traps had been set in every vineyard, under every olive tree. Hundreds of small birds, a string tied round a wing, had been dragged about the streets by the boys of the village. Now, mutilated symbols of the Holy Dove, they were to be set free in the church to play their role in the jubilant commemoration of Christ's return to Heaven. They fluttered about for a while helpless and bewildered, breaking their wings against the windows before they fell down to die on the church floor. At daybreak I had been up on the church roof in order to smash some of the windowpanes but only a few of the doomed birds found their way to freedom.

The birds! The birds! How much happier would my life on the beautiful island have been had I not loved them! I loved to see them come every spring in thousands and thousands, it was a joy to hear them sing in the garden of San Michele. But there came a time when I wished that they had not come, when I wished I could have signalled to them to fly on with the wild geese high overhead, straight to my own country in the North where they would be safe from man. For the fair island that was a paradise to me was a hell to them. They came just before sunrise to rest after their long flight across the Mediterranean, the goal of the journey was so far away, the land where they were born and where they were to raise their young. They came in thousands: wood-pigeons, thrushes, waders, quail, orioles, skylarks, nightingales, wagtails, swallows, warblers and many other tiny artists on their way to give spring concerts to the silent forests and fields in the North. A couple of hours later they fluttered helplessly in the nets stretched all over the island. In the evening they were packed by hundreds in small wooden boxes without food and water and dispatched by steamer to Marseilles to be eaten in the smart restaurants of Paris. It was a lucrative trade, Capri was for centuries the seat of a bishop entirely financed by the sale of the netted birds.

Do you know how they are caught in the nets? Hidden under the thickets are caged decoy birds who repeat incessantly, automatically

their monotonous call. They cannot stop, they go on calling out night and day till they die. Long before science knew anything about the various nerve centres in the human brain, the Devil had revealed to man that by stinging out the eyes of a bird with a red-hot needle the bird would sing automatically. It is an old story, it was known to the Greeks and the Romans, it is still done today along the southern shores of Spain and Greece. Only a few birds in a hundred survive the operation, still it is good business, a blinded quail brings a high price. During six weeks of the spring and six weeks of the autumn, the whole slope of Monte Barbarossa was covered with nets from the ruined castle on top down to the garden wall of San Michele at the foot. The mountain was owned by an ex-butcher, a specialist in the blinding of birds. The war between him and me had been going on incessantly. I had appealed to the Prefect of Naples, to the Government in Rome; I had been told there was nothing to be done, the mountain was his. I had obtained an audience from the highest lady in the land; she had smiled at me with her enchanting smile that had won her the heart of the whole of Italy, she had honoured me with an invitation to luncheon. The first item on the menu had been stuffed larks.

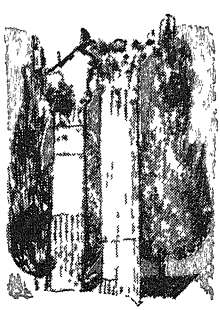
I scraped off the rust from the little two-pounder the English had abandoned in the garden in 1808 and started firing off a shot every five minutes from midnight till sunrise in the hope of frightening the birds away from the fatal mountain. The ex-butcher sued me for interfering with the lawful exercise of his trade, I was fined two hundred lire. I trained the dogs to bark the whole night at the cost of what little sleep remained for me. My big Maremma dog died suddenly, I found traces of arsenic in his stomach. I caught sight of the murderer the next night lurking behind the garden wall and knocked him down. I was fined five hundred lire for assault. I sold my beautiful Greek vase and my beloved Madonna by Desiderio da Settignano in order to raise the enormous sum he asked for the mountain, several hundred times its value. When I came with the money he grinned at me and said that the price had doubled. The slaughter went on. In despair I fled from San Michele, to return when the last birds had passed over the island.

The first thing I heard when I came back was that the ex-butcher was lying on the point of death. Masses were read for his salvation twice a day. Towards evening the *parroco* arrived, asking me in the name of

Christ to visit the dying man. The village doctor suspected pneumonia, the druggist was sure it was a stroke, the barber thought it was apoplexy. I said I had never been a doctor in Capri except for the poor. Only on one condition would I come, that the man would swear on the crucifix that if he pulled through he would never again sting out the eyes of a bird and that he would sell me the mountain at his exorbitant price of a month ago. The man refused. In the night he was given the Last Sacraments. At daybreak the *parroco* appeared again. My offer had been accepted, he had sworn on the crucifix. Two hours later I tapped a pint of pus from his left pleura to the consternation of the doctor and to the glory of the village saint, for, contrary to my expectations, the man recovered. Miracle!

The mountain of Barbarossa is now a bird sanctuary. Thousands of tired birds of passage rest safely on its slopes every spring and autumn. I have never said a word to belittle the miracle of Sant'Antonio which saved the lives of at least fifteen thousand birds a year. But when all is over for me, I mean to whisper to the nearest angel that, with due respect to Sant'Antonio, it was I and not he who tapped the pus out of the butcher's left pleura and to implore the angel to put in a kind word for me if nobody else will. I am sure Almighty God loves the birds.

The Bambino



SANT'ANNA shook her head and wanted to know whether it was wise to send out such a small baby on such a windy day, and if it was a respectable house the grandchild was to be taken to? The Madonna said there was nothing to worry about, the child would be well wrapped up and she had always heard children were welcome in San Michele. Don Salvatore, the youngest priest of Anacapri, lifted the cradle from the shrine, the sacristan lit the wax candles and off they went.

During my stay in San Michele I used to receive every year a visit from the "Bambino"—a local baby chosen for a ceremony paying homage to the Infant Jesus. This visit was the greatest honour that could possibly be bestowed upon us. First came a small choirboy ringing a

bell, then came two "Children of Mary" in their white frocks and blue veils, then came the sacristan swinging the censer, then Don Salvatore carrying the cradle. As they passed through the village, the men bared their heads, the women held up their babies that they might see the Royal Infant, a golden crown on his head, a silver rattle round his neck, and the street boys called out: *"Il Bambino! Il Bambino!"*

At the door of San Michele stood the whole household with roses in their hands to welcome our guest. The best room in the house had been turned into a nursery, hung with garlands of rosemary and ivy. On a table spread with our best linen cloth burnt two wax candles, for small children do not like to be left in the dark. In the corner of the nursery stood my Florentine Madonna, hugging her own baby. From the ceiling burnt the holy lamp. By the cradle lay a few humble toys to keep company with the Bambino; a bald-headed doll, sole survivor from Giovannina and Rosina's childhood, a wooden donkey lent by Elisa's eldest girl, a rattle in the shape of a horn against the evil eye. In a basket lay Elisa's cat with her six new-born kittens, brought there for the occasion. In a jar on the floor stood a bush of rosemary in flower. Do you know why rosemary? Because when the Madonna washed the linen of the Infant Jesus Christ, she hung His shirt to dry on a bush of rosemary.

Don Salvatore deposited the cradle in its shrine and left the Bambino in the charge of my womenfolk after most detailed recommendations to watch over him. Elisa's children played about on the floor to keep him company and at Ave Maria the whole household knelt before the cradle reciting their prayers. Giovannina poured a little more oil in the lamp for the night, they waited till the Bambino had fallen asleep and then they went away silently. When all was still in the house I went up to the nursery to have a look at the Bambino before I went to bed. The light from the holy lamp fell on the cradle, I could just see him lying there smiling in his sleep.

And I thought of that other child, this Bambino's divine predecessor. Little did He know that the day would come when those who knelt by His cradle would abandon Him, when those who said they loved Him would betray Him, when cruel hands would tear the golden crown from His brow and replace it by a crown of thorns and nail Him to a cross.

The night He died a sombre old man, the Emperor Tiberius, was wandering up and down the same marble floor where I was standing

now. He had risen from his couch roused in his sleep by a haunting dream. His face was dark as the sky overhead, fear shone in his eye. He summoned his astronomers and his wise men from the East and bade them tell him the meaning of his dream, but before they could read the golden writing on the sky, one by one the stars flickered and went out.

The Festa di Sant' Antonio



THE Festa di Sant'Antonio was the greatest day in the year for Anacapri. For weeks the little village had been astir. The streets had been cleaned, the houses where the procession would pass had been whitewashed, the church decorated with red silk hangings and tapestries, the fireworks and the band ordered from Naples.

The festival opened with the arrival of the band on the eve of the great day. Half across the bay they began to blow for all they were worth, far too far away to be heard by us in Anacapri but near enough with favourable wind to irritate the Capresi in the hated village below. On landing at the Marina the band in their gold-laced uniforms were packed in two big carts with their gigantic instruments and taken as far as the carriage road was finished. The rest of the way they climbed the steep Phoenician steps, blowing incessantly. Under the wall of San Michele they were received by a deputation from the town hall. The magnificent bandmaster raised his baton and, preceded by the boys of the village, the band made their solemn entrance into Anacapri blowing their horns, clarinets and oboes, banging their drums and cymbals and rattling their triangles as hard as they could.

Inauguration concert on the piazza, all decorated with flags and crammed with people, lasting till midnight. A few hours sleep in the old barracks interrupted by the bursting of rockets to announce that the great day was dawning. At four a.m. reveille through the village, blowing lustily. At five, Mass in church, attended by the band on empty stomachs. At seven, black coffee, bread and fresh goat cheese.

At eight the church was filled to the last place, the men on one side, the women on the other, their babies on their laps. In the centre of the

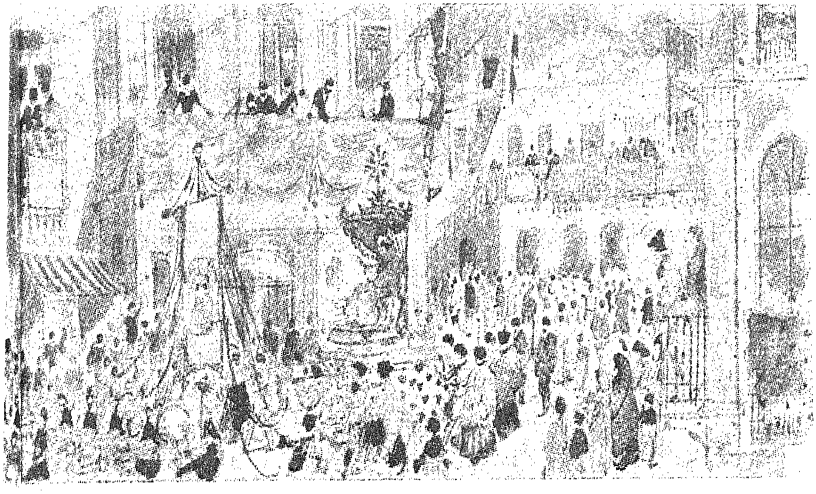


church the band on a specially erected tribune. The twelve priests of Anacapri in their choir stalls behind the High Altar embarked courageously on the Missa Solemnis of Pergolesi, trusting to Providence and the band to see them through. Musical intermezzo, a furious galop played by the band with great bravura, much appreciated by the congregation. At ten Messa Cantata from the High Altar with painful solos by old Don Antonio and tremolos of protest and cries of distress from the organ, worn out by the wear of three centuries.

At eleven, sermon from the pulpit in commemoration of Sant'Antonio, and his miracles, each miracle illustrated by gestures. Now the orator would raise his hands in ecstasy to the Saints in Heaven, now he would point to the floor to locate the dwellings of the damned. Now he would bend his head in rapturous silence to listen to the chants of the angels, now, pale with terror, he would put his hands to his ears not to hear the grinding of the teeth of *il Demonio* and the cries of the sinners in their cauldrons. At last, streaming with perspiration and prostrated by two hours of tears and maledictions at a temperature of 105° Fahrenheit, he would sink down on the floor of the pulpit with a terrific curse on the Protestants.

Twelve o'clock. Great excitement on the piazza. The procession is coming out! First a dozen small children, almost babies, hand in hand. Some in short white tunics and angel wings like Raphael's cherubs. Some, naked and adorned with garlands of vine leaves and wreaths of roses round their brows, looked like a Greek bas-relief. Then came the Children of Mary, tall slender girls in white robes and long blue veils. Then came the Benevolent Society, old, grave-looking men in quaint black and white cassocks of the time of Savonarola.

La musica! The band blowing for all they were worth a wild polka, a favourite piece of the Saint. Then, surrounded by the priests in their gala robes and saluted by hundreds of fireworks, appeared Sant'Antonio erect on his throne, his hand stretched out in blessing. His robe was strewn with jewels and ex-votos, his mantle of magnificent old brocade was fastened on his breast with a fibula of sapphires and rubies. From a



string of multicoloured glass beads round his neck hung a huge coral in the shape of a horn to protect him against the evil eye.

Close on the heels of Sant'Antonio came I, bareheaded, wax taper in hand, walking by the side of the mayor—an honour bestowed upon me by special permission from the Archbishop of Sorrento. Then came the municipal council and the notables of Anacapri: the doctor, the notary, the apothecary, the barber, the tobacconist, the tailor. Then came sailors, fishermen, peasants, followed at a respectful distance by their womenfolk and children. In the rear of the procession walked humbly half a dozen dogs, a couple of goats with their kids trotting by their side, and a pig or two, on the look-out for their owners. Masters of Ceremony, gilt sticks in their hands, rushed to and fro along the flank of the procession to keep order in the ranks. As the procession wound its way through the lanes, basketfuls of sweet-scented *ginestra,* or broom—"the flower of Sant'Antonio"—were thrown from every window. Here and there a cord had been stretched across the street from one window to another, and just as the Saint passed by, a gaily coloured cardboard angel would perform a precipitate flight with flapping wings across the rope to the huge delight of the crowd. In front of San Michele the procession halted and the Saint was reverently deposited on a specially erected stand to rest. The band kept on blowing their *fortissimo,* my womenfolk threw

handfuls of roses from the windows, old Pacciale rang the bells from the chapel. It was a grand day for us.

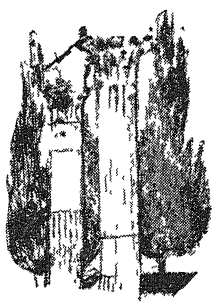
Back to the piazza where Sant'Antonio was reinstalled in his shrine in the church, the procession went home to their macaroni, and the band sat down to a banquet at the Hotel Paradiso. At four the doors of San Michele were flung open, half an hour later the whole village was in the garden, rich and poor, men, women, children and new-born babies, cripples, idiots, blind and lame, those who could not come by themselves were carried on the shoulders of the others. A long row of tables with huge demijohns of San Michele's best wine stretched from one end of the pergola to the other. Old Pacciale, Baldassare and Mastro Nicola were hard at work refilling the wine-glasses and Giovannina, Rosina and Elisa offered cigars, coffee, cakes and sweets. The band blew incessantly from the upper loggia. The house was thrown open, nothing was locked up, all my precious belongings were lying about as usual on tables, chairs and on the floor. Over a thousand people wandered from room to room, nothing was ever touched, nothing was ever missing.

When the bells rang Ave Maria the reception was over and they all went away after much handshaking, happier than ever. The band led the way to the piazza, the notables took their seats, the people stood, packed like herrings. The majestic bandmaster raised his baton, the concert began. *Rigoletto, Il Trovatore,* Neapolitan folk songs, polkas, mazurkas, tarantellas until eleven o'clock when two thousand lire worth of fireworks exploded in the air to the glory of Sant'Antonio. At midnight the official programme was exhausted but nobody went to bed, the village resounded with singing, laughter and music the whole night long. Long live joy! Long live the Saint! Long live music!

The band was to depart by the six o'clock morning boat. On their way, they halted under the windows of San Michele for their customary Serenade of Farewell. I can still see Henry James, my guest for the occasion, looking down from his bedroom window, shaking with laughter, in his pyjamas. The band had been sadly reduced in numbers and efficiency. The bandmaster had become delirious, the drummer had dislocated his right shoulder, the cymbalist had split his eardrums. Two members of the band incapacitated by emotion had had to be taken down to the Marina on donkeys. The survivors lay on their backs in the road blowing with their last breath, until, revived by black coffee,

they staggered to their feet and, with a friendly wave of their hands, reeled down the Phoenician steps. The Festa di Sant'Antonio was over.

Farewell to San Michele



I HAVE BEEN away for a whole year. I have come back to an old tower in Materita near San Michele with one eye less than when I went away. No doubt it was in order to prepare for such an eventuality that I was made to start life with two eyes. I have come back a different man. My wandering about the world in search of happiness is over, my life as a fashionable doctor is over. I have given up reading and have taken up singing instead. I am learning typewriting, each hammer-stroke of my typewriter strikes simultaneously the manuscript and my skull with a knock-out blow. My thoughts are apt to lose their bearing in this American labyrinth of cogs and wheels! I had better warn the reader that I can only accept responsibility for what I have written with my own hand, not for what has been concocted in collaboration with the Corona Typewriter Company.

When Henry James was staying with me at San Michele he encouraged me to write a book about my island home. There was nothing like writing a book, he said, for a man who wanted to get away from his own misery, nothing like writing a book for a man who could not sleep. I have blessed Henry James for his advice.

It is with joy and not with sorrow that my thoughts go back to San Michele, where I have lived the happiest years of my life.

I had been warned over and over again by the fire in my eyes that I was not worthy to live there, but I had paid no heed to the warnings. I had come back, summer after summer, to the blinding light of San Michele. *Beware of the light, beware of the light!*

I have accepted my fate. It is good to wander about in the soft light under the olives of Materita. It is good to sit and dream in the old tower. It looks towards the west, where the sun sets. Soon the sun will sink into the sea, then comes the twilight, then comes the night.

It has been a beautiful day.

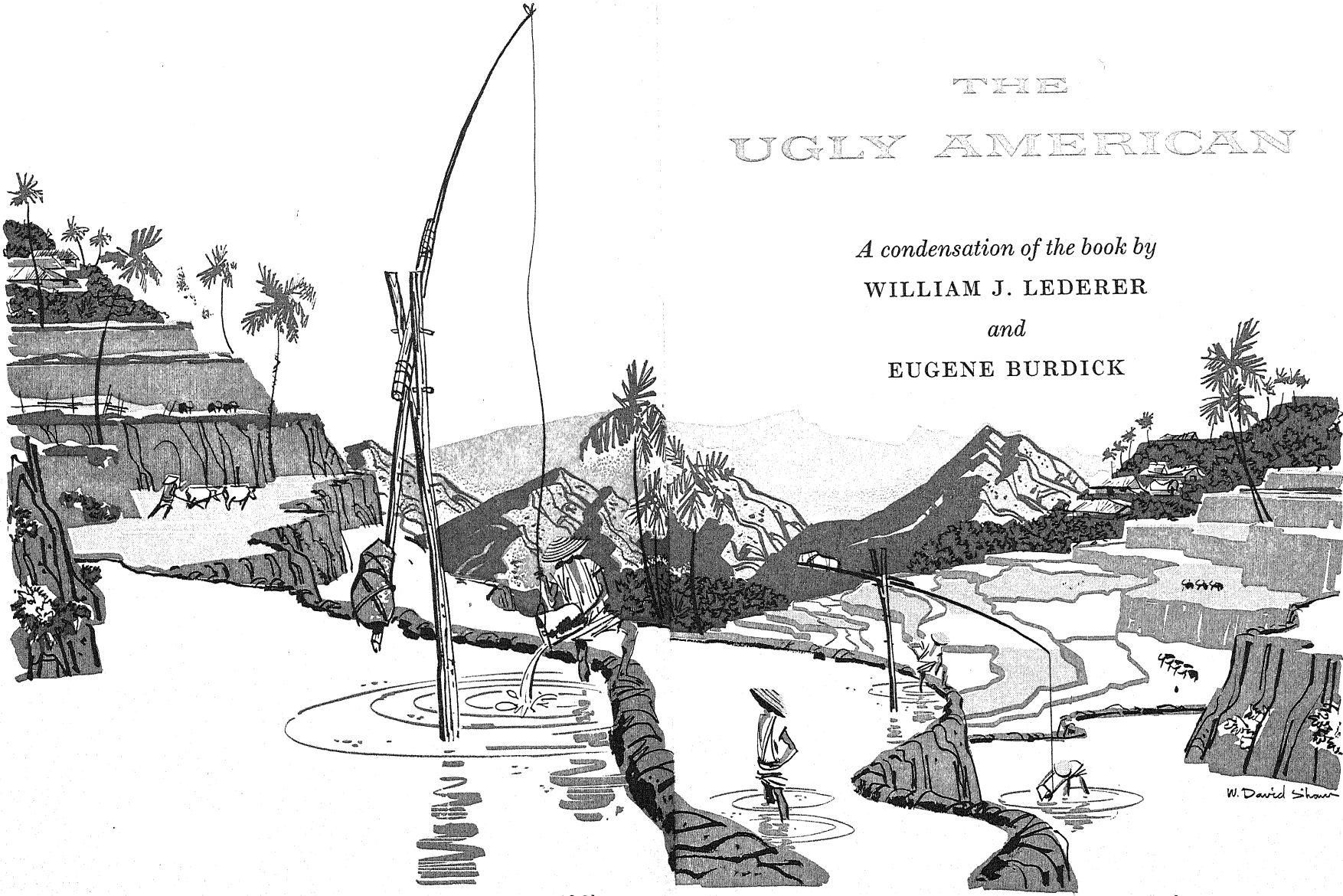
THE UGLY AMERICAN

A condensation of the book by

WILLIAM J. LEDERER

and

EUGENE BURDICK



Illustrations by W. David Shaw

"The Ugly American" is published by Victor Gollancz, London

THE high-flown language of the conference table and the grandiose plans of diplomats meant nothing to Homer Atkins. He was an engineer; he had come to help the villagers of South-east Asia; and, unlike his superiors, he knew what the villagers needed. It was Jeepo, a native mechanic from the backwoods of Sarkhan, who spoke his language. "In the world of bolts and nuts, pistons and leathers and good black grease" these two understood each other.

This brief, deeply human chapter from *The Ugly American* is the account of what they achieved together, and of how Homer's devoted wife, Emma, carved her own lasting place in the affections of the native villagers. It is a little story, but its message is big.

"A Spellbinder." —*Daily Express*



AMMIT,'' said Homer Atkins to himself as he looked round the conference-room at the fashionably dressed men—Vietnamese, French and American. The princes of bureaucracy were the same in this corner of South-east Asia as in the rest of the world. They sat in their freshly pressed clothes, ran their clean fingers over their smooth cheeks, smiled knowingly at one another, and asked engineers like Atkins silly questions.

What Homer wanted to say was, "Listen, you fools, it's a simple problem. Let us engineers solve it and come back with what we've been able to do. Then, if you don't like what we've done, throw me out of the country. But don't bring up these silly questions about politics and native psychology."

But Atkins didn't say it. He didn't even swear, which was unusual for him. He looked at his hands. This was a trick he had learned long ago. His hands always reminded him that he was an ugly man, and somehow this thought always made him pause, which in turn gave him time to prepare his next step.

Now Atkins stared at his hands as if they belonged to a stranger. They were laced with prominent veins and spotted with big freckles. The palms of his hands were calloused; the fingers bore the tiny nicks and scars of a lifetime of practical engineering. Homer Atkins was worth three million dollars, every dime of which he had earned; but he was most proud and confident of his ugly strong hands. He knew he could always make a living with them.

Atkins was aware that he was the only man in the room not wearing a tie. In fact, he was wearing a rough khaki shirt, khaki trousers and old Marine field boots. He still had the smell of the jungle about him; the other men all smelt of after-shave lotion. Homer heaved a slow sigh and lifted his head.

"All right, gentlemen, I'm going to say it once more," he said. "The United States asked me to come out here to give you some advice on building dams and military roads. You know what I am; I'm a heavy-construction man. Earth moving, concrete, road building, that sort of thing. Now I've been here for ten months, and I've walked all over this country. I've talked to a thousand people. I've surveyed dam sites and routes for military roads and airstrips. . . ."

A slender Vietnamese interrupted. He spoke English with a French accent, but even with the accent his English was better than Atkins's.

"Mr. Atkins, we are very grateful to you for coming here to help us," the Vietnamese said gently. "Your government has been generous. You have been generous. Now we would like your recommendations as to where the roads and dams should be built."

"I went over all that in the report," Atkins said. "Didn't you read it?"

"Yes, Mr. Atkins, we all read it," a middle-aged Frenchman said. "But it didn't tell us where the roads and dams should go."

"Because you don't need dams and roads," Atkins said. "Maybe later, but right now you need to concentrate on things your own people can manufacture and use. I don't know much about farming or city

planning or that kind of thing, but I can tell you that your people need other things besides military roads. You ever hear of a food shortage being solved by building a highway designed to carry tanks and guns?"

"Mr. Atkins, I think whether or not we need dams and highways is a political decision we must make for ourselves," the Vietnamese said, after whispering rapidly to the Frenchman. "Do I gather that you do not intend to recommend the building of any dams or highways in Vietnam?"

"Look, mister," Atkins answered evenly, "I don't know how often you get out of Saigon and into the countryside, but you'd better go and take a look at things."

Mr. Josiah Gordon, the representative from the American Embassy, was beginning to redden, but Atkins didn't care. "You want big industry," he went on. "You want big works projects scattered all over the countryside. That takes skilled workmen, and lots of money, and a whole lot of production-minded people. Of course you've got good hard-working people out there in the wilds, people who have plenty of savvy. But they don't want what you want yet. It takes time for that. That's why I recommend that you start small, with little things. And then, after you lick them, go on to the bigger things. Hell, we could build dams and roads for you—but you don't have the capacity or need for them now."

"Mr. Atkins, I think that's a political decision beyond your province," Josiah Gordon cut in quickly. "Let's just let your report stand and we'll discuss it on a higher level."

"O.K., O.K. But have any of you birds been *out* in the wilds?" Atkins asked stubbornly. "Don't give me the statistics, don't tell me about national aspirations. Just answer me: Have you been out in the wilds?"

The Frenchmen, the Vietnamese, the Americans all sat quietly in collective embarrassment. The hint of a sneer showed on the face of the tall Vietnamese, and Atkins was aware again, as always when he caught that look on someone's face, of his own personal ugliness.

A tall, red-haired American stood up at the back.

"Mr. Atkins, my name is Gilbert MacWhite. I'm American Ambassador to Sarkhan, and, of course, I'm a visitor here, not a participant. But I should like to know what you recommended in your report."

"Ambassador MacWhite, I really don't think we should take the time

of these other gentlemen to go over that again," Mr. Gordon said, caught between the antagonism of the French and the Vietnamese and his respect for MacWhite.

"It won't take long," Atkins cut in. "I told them the first step was to start things that the Vietnamese can do themselves. Then they can go on to the big things as they pick up skills."

"What kind of things should they start with?" MacWhite asked.

"First, something like a brick factory. Cheap to start, easy to run, and it would give them building materials. Second, stone quarries back in the hills. Plenty of good stone there, and it could be used for building."

The Frenchman was red in the face. He spoke quickly to the tall Vietnamese, and then stood up.

"Mr. Atkins," he said in perfect English, "you may not know it, but a French firm has a concession to handle the production of building materials in this country. If everyone started forming brick and quarry companies, it would ruin our relationship."

"That's your problem, not mine," said Atkins. "Third, someone ought to set up a model canning plant. The country people catch fish and raise vegetables, but they spoil before they can be brought to town. Small, cheap canning plants in about twenty towns would do plenty to help out. Fourth, the coastal land from Qui Nhom to Phan Rang is acid and won't grow anything. But right behind it, just over the hills, is a long strip of beautiful rich land. Why not just run little finger-roads back through the jungle so the coastal people can get to the good land? It's cheap and it's easy. Couple of bull-dozers could rip out the roads and that would be it."

"Now listen, Mr. Atkins, we didn't bring you out here as an agricultural expert," Josiah Gordon said. "We already have lots of agricultural experts here."

"Well, tell 'em to get off their backsides and out into the wilds then," Atkins said, but without anger. He was looking at MacWhite. This was the first man who had listened to him for a long time.

"Ambassador MacWhite," Mr. Gordon said, "I am aware of Mr. Atkins's great talents, but this is most improper—an engineer giving gratuitous advice on farming!"

"And on military requirements!" the Frenchman added.

"Look, Ambassador, I could tell you a lot more little things, but first

I have something to say to *him,*" and Atkins pointed a finger at the Frenchman. "You've got lots of military experts round here, but let me remind you of something. Ho Chi-minh made his Communists build a secret road from the Chinese border right through the jungle the entire length of Vietnam, almost to Saigon. That's how he got supplies through to Dien Bien Phu. And the next time he moves he'll be using that road to run supplies down to take Saigon!"

The Frenchmen were on their feet, and the Vietnamese were fluttering in the room like frightened birds. Two French colonels were protesting loudly.

Atkins stood up, and there was a sudden silence. He said just one word —"Nuts!"—and then he left. No one doubted that he was on his way back to America.

When Atkins was half-way down the hall, he heard footsteps behind him. He kept on walking, then stopped as a hand fell on his shoulder. It was MacWhite. "Mr. Atkins, I'd like to talk to you for a few minutes," MacWhite said. "I thought that stuff you outlined was good and sound. Let me buy you a drink."

"Then you were the only one in the room who bothered to think about it," Atkins said, and laughed.

Ten minutes later they were sitting in a café drinking beer.

"Was that true about Ho's road down from China to Saigon?" MacWhite asked.

"Damned right it's true. I saw it. It's not a wide road, and it's cut so that the overhang of the trees conceals it from the air. But it's wide enough so that a couple of thousand Communists can trot a lot of supplies down it. During the fight for Dien Bien Phu that road was solid with two lines of Communists . . . one delivering supplies, the other trotting back for more. That's what surprised the hell out of the French up there."

"Why didn't anyone tell the French?"

"They hate 'em, mister. Even the anti-Communists hate the French."

"Mr. Atkins, if I could get you reassigned to Sarkhan, would you consider coming there?" MacWhite asked. "I know you've had a rough time, and I know you've got plenty to keep you busy back in the States. But I think you could do some valuable things for me. And I'd give you a free hand. You could live in the wilds if you wanted."

"What kind of problems are you having?" Atkins asked suspiciously.

"Well, for example," MacWhite said, "Sarkhan is very hilly and they have a hard time getting water up to the hill-side paddy fields. They use the old dip lifts which lift only a few hundred gallons a day. For a start, maybe you could work on that."

"Maybe, maybe," Atkins said, and his face puckered in thought. He took a pencil from his pocket and began to sketch in a pocket notebook. Beneath his ugly fingers a pump began to appear. It was a surprisingly beautiful and pleasing sketch. MacWhite said nothing. He knew when to wait. He ordered more beer.

"Well, maybe that might be interesting," Atkins said after fifteen minutes of silence, as if there had been no lapse of time. "If I did it, would you let me put out a kind of *Popular Mechanics* magazine for distribution throughout the country? If I got a good design I would want it to be used. I've had enough of these French. Every time they bring anything into a country there has to be a trade agreement and a patent and a royalty. The result is that no one can afford their things."

"You can have a magazine, and it will be printed in Sarkhanese," MacWhite said.

"Now, not so fast," Atkins said. "I'm not sure I can lick the problem. These things take time." But he was looking back at his sketch, crossing things out and adding new lines. He did not even look up when MacWhite put his card on the table with a note that Atkins's orders would come by cable as soon as it could be arranged.

TWO WEEKS later Atkins and his wife left by plane for Sarkhan. Emma, a stout woman with freckles across her nose, was, in her way, quite as ugly as her husband. She was hopelessly in love with Atkins, but had never been able to tell him why adequately.

She did not blink when Atkins told her they were going to Sarkhan. She told Homer she'd be pleased to move into a smaller house where she could manage things with her own hands, without servants.

The cottage the Atkinses occupied was a small one in a suburb of Haidho. They were the only Caucasians in the community. Their house had pressed-earth floors, one spigot of cold water, a charcoal fire, two very comfortable hammocks, a horde of small, harmless insects, and a small, dark-eyed Sarkhanese boy about nine years old who apparently

came with the house. The boy's name was Ong. He appeared promptly at six each morning and spent the entire day following Emma about.

Emma Atkins enjoyed herself in Sarkhan. She learned enough of the language to discuss with her neighbours the best places to buy chickens, ducks and fresh vegetables. She learned how to prepare beautifully fluffy rice seasoned with saffron. She liked working in her house, and it was a matter of some pride to her that she was as good a housekeeper as most of her neighbours.

Homer Atkins was kept busy with his man-powered water pump. The idea had developed very slowly in his mind. What was needed was some kind of efficient pump to raise the water from one terraced paddy to another. Lifting water was usually done by a pail, or by a cloth sack, attached to the end of a long pole. One man would fill the pail and swing it up to the next terrace where another man would empty it. It was a slow and cumbersome method, but the Sarkhanese had been doing it for generations and saw no reason to change. Atkins saw there was no sense in trying to talk them out of an obviously inefficient method unless he could offer them one more efficient to replace it.

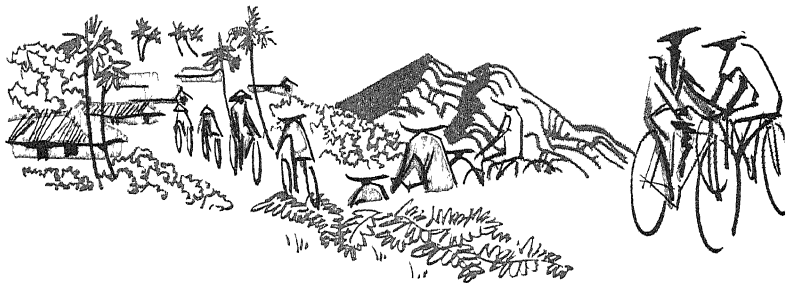
He solved two-thirds of his problem. A simple pump needed three things. First, it needed cheap and readily available piping. He had decided that the pipes could be made out of bamboo, which was abundant.

Second, it needed a cheap and efficient pump mechanism. This had taken longer to find, but in the end Atkins had succeeded. Outside many Sarkhanese villages were piled the remains of jeeps which had been discarded by the military authorities. Atkins had taken pistons from one of these jeeps and had replaced the rings with bands of cheap felt to make a piston for his pump. He then cut the block of the jeep in two; he used one of the cylinders as a suction chamber, and the other cylinder as a discharge chamber. With a simple mechanical linkage the piston could be agitated up and down, and would suck water as high as thirty feet.

The third problem, which Atkins had not yet solved, was the question of what power could be applied to the linkage.

In the end Emma gave him the answer. "Why don't you just send off to the States for a lot of hand pumps like they use on those little cars men run up and down the railways?" she asked one day.

"Now, look, I've explained to you before," Atkins said. "It's got to be something they use out here. It's no good if I go spending a hundred



thousand dollars bringing in something. It has to be something right here, something the natives understand."

"Why, Homer," Emma said, "with all that money you've got in the bank back in Pittsburgh, why don't you give some of it to these nice Sarkhanese?"

Atkins looked up sharply, but saw at once that she was teasing him. He grunted. "You know why. Whenever you give a man something for nothing the first person he comes to dislike is you. If the pump is going to work at all, it has to be their pump, not mine."

Emma smiled and turned to look out of the window. A group of Sarkhanese, on bicycles as usual, were moving in towards the market place.

She watched them for a few moments, and then spun round, excitement in her eyes. "Why don't you use bicycles? There are millions of them in this country and they must wear out. Maybe you could use the drive mechanism of an old bicycle to move the pump."

Atkins looked at Emma and slowly sat up straight. He slapped his hand against his knee.

"By God, I think you've got it, girl," he said softly. "We could take the wheels off an old bike, link the chain of the bike to one large reduction gear, and then drive the piston up and down with an eccentric."

Atkins began to walk round the room. Emma, a slight smile on her face, returned to her charcoal fire over which she had a fragrant pot of chicken cooking. In a few moments she heard the rustle of paper and knew that Atkins was bent over his drawing-board. Two hours later he was still drawing furiously. An hour after that he went to a locker, took out half a dozen bottles of beer, and brought them back to his work-



table. By dinner-time he had drunk them all and was whistling under his breath. When Emma tapped him on the shoulder and told him that dinner was ready, he swung round excitedly.

"Look, baby, I think I've got it," he said, and began to explain it to her rapidly, interrupting himself to make quick calculations on a piece of paper.

When she finally got him to sit down, he ate so fast that the chicken gravy ran down his chin, but he made sure none of the gravy got on his precious drawings. Emma Atkins watched her husband fondly. She was proud of him, and she was happy when he was happy. Today she felt very happy indeed.

"No more beer, Homer Atkins," Emma said, grinning. "You'll get drunk. And then you'll forget that it was my idea about the bicycle."

"Your idea?" he yelled in astonishment. "Woman, you're crazy. I was thinking about that all along. You just reminded me of it."

But then he went back to the locker, brought back two bottles of beer, and blew froth at her when he filled her glass.

Two days later Atkins had a working model. Not a single item in the crude pump would have to be imported. He had calculated that there was probably enough scrap round the countryside to make a couple of

thousand pumps. What he had to do now was to get several pumps actually in operation. At this point Emma Atkins took over.

"Now look, Homer, don't go running off like a wild man," Emma said softly. "You've got a good machine there. I'm proud of you. But don't think that just because it's good the Sarkhanese are going to start using it right away. You have to let them use the machine themselves and in their own way. If you try to jam it down their throats, they'll never use it."

"All right, Mrs. Foster Dulles, you tell me what to do," Atkins said. He knew she was right and he was grateful to her.

Emma calmly explained her plan to Homer. It was an intricate, beautiful plan, and he wished that some of the stuffed-shirts in the American Embassy could hear his wife talking.

The next day he put into operation Emma Atkins's grand strategy.

He drove in his used jeep to the tiny village of Chang 'dong, a community of one hundred souls, living in fifteen or twenty houses. The village was set precariously on a steep hill sixty miles outside Haidho. The soil there was rich; but the back-breaking, time-consuming process of lifting water up seven or eight levels had always made Chang 'dong a poor village.

Atkins politely asked the first person he met where the home of the headman was. He talked to the headman, a venerable man of seventy-five, without an interpreter. It was not easy, but he could tell that the headman was pleased that Atkins was making the effort to talk his language. The old man sensed what words Atkins was searching for, and with infinite courtesy supplied them. The conversation moved along more rapidly than Homer had expected.

Atkins explained that he was an American and an inventor. He had an idea for a pump to lift water. He, Atkins, wanted to develop and patent this pump and sell it at a profit. What Atkins wanted the headman to find was a Sarkhanese worker with mechanical skill. Atkins said he would pay well for this man's time and skill; and if he was able to help with the pump, he would become half-owner of the patent. The old man nodded gravely. They then began a long, complicated and delicate negotiation over the matter of how much the native mechanic should be paid. Atkins understood all this quite well—it was rather like negotiating with a trade-union representative in the States. Each man

knew he would eventually have to compromise; and each took pleasure in talking the whole thing out.

In the end Atkins got the services of a mechanic for a price which he knew was just slightly higher than the going rate. Both Atkins and the headman were satisfied. They shook hands, and the headman left to bring in the mechanic. Atkins reached into his shirt pocket, took out a cigar, and lit it with pleasure. This would, he thought, be fun.

When the headman returned he brought with him a small, stocky, heavily muscled man whom he introduced as Jeepo. The headman explained that he was called Jeepo because of his reputation in the maintenance and repair of jeeps. Atkins studied Jeepo, and he liked what he saw. Jeepo looked like a craftsman. His fingernails were as dirty as Atkins's, and his hands were also covered with dozens of little scars. Jeepo looked back steadily at Atkins without humility or apology, and Atkins felt that in the mechanic's world of bolts and nuts, pistons and leathers and good black grease he and Jeepo would understand one another.

And Jeepo was ugly. He was ugly in a rowdy, bruised, carefree way that pleased Atkins. The two men smiled at one another.

"The headman says you are a good mechanic," Atkins said. "He says that you're an expert on repairing jeeps. But I must have a man who is expert at other things as well. Have you ever worked on anything besides jeeps?"

Jeepo smiled. "I've worked on winches, pumps, American and French tanks, windmills, bicycles, the toilets of wealthy white people and a few aeroplanes," he said. "I feel that I can work with anything that is mechanical. But that is only my opinion. Try me."

"In my jeep outside is a heap of equipment," Atkins said. "You and I will unload it and we'll start at once."

By the middle of the afternoon they had assembled most of Atkins's equipment on the edge of a paddy on the second level of the village of Chang 'dong. Twenty-five feet of bamboo pipe were fastened together; the bottom of the pipe was put into a backwater of the river that flowed by the village. The top piece of the pipe was fitted by a rubber gasket to the crude pump which Atkins had designed. Above the pump was the frame of a used bicycle with both wheels removed. By late afternoon the assembly was ready. Jeepo had done it entirely by himself.

Atkins squatted calmly in the mud waiting for Jeepo to finish. The

headman and two or three of the elders of the village were squatting as calmly beside him. They understood perfectly what the machine was intended for; they were not sure it would work.

"Sir, the mechanism is ready to operate," Jeepo finally said quietly. "I'm not sure we can get suction at so great a height; but I'd be pleased to turn the bicycle pedals to test it."

Atkins nodded.

Jeepo climbed aboard the bicycle and began to pump slowly. The chain drive of the bicycle turned with increasing speed. The crude pipes made a sucking noise. For several seconds there was no sound except this gurgle. Then, suddenly, from the end of the pump, a jet of dirty brown water gushed forth. Jeepo did not stop pedalling nor did he smile; but the headman and elders could not restrain their excitement about the amount of water being lifted to the second rice terrace.

"This is a very clever machine," the headman said to Atkins. "In a few minutes you have lifted more water than we could lift by our old methods in five hours of work."

Atkins did not respond to the man's delight. He was waiting to see how Jeepo reacted. He sensed that Jeepo was not entirely happy or convinced.

Jeepo continued to pump at the machine. When the small paddy was full of water he stopped, and swung down out of the bicycle seat.

"It is a very clever machine, Mr. Atkins," Jeepo said quietly. "But it will not be a sensible machine for this country."

Atkins looked steadily at Jeepo for a long moment, and then nodded.

"Why not?" he asked.

Jeepo did not respond at once. He moved silently round the mechanism, twisting a bolt here, adjusting a lever there; then he stood up and faced Atkins. "The machine works very, very well," Jeepo said. "But to make it work a person would have to have a second bicycle. In this country, Mr. Atkins, very few people have enough money to afford two bicycles. Unless you can find another way to drive the pump, or unless your government is prepared to give us thousands of bicycles, your very clever device is a waste of time."

For a moment Atkins felt a flush of anger. It was a hard thing to be criticized so bluntly. Then, with the memory of Emma's tact in his mind, he turned back to Jeepo.

"What happens to old bicycles in this country?" he asked. "Aren't there enough of them to serve as power machines for the pumps?"

"We ride bicycles until they are no good," Jeepo said. "When a man throws his bicycle away, it's too old to be used for one of these pumps."

For a moment the ugly American faced the ugly Sarkhanese. Then Atkins grinned. "All right, Jeepo, you say you're an expert mechanic. What would you do? Am I simply to give up my idea—or can we find some other way to give power to the pump?"

Jeepo squatted in the shallow rice field, his khaki shorts resting in three inches of mud. He stared fixedly at the improbable machine, and for nearly half an hour he said nothing.

The headman looked at Atkins and talked in a sharp voice to the elders. The headman was embarrassed at Jeepo's arrogance, and he was saying that the entire village of Chang 'dong would lose face by this ridiculous performance. Jeepo's ears became slightly red at the criticism, but he did not turn his head or acknowledge that he heard it. Atkins squatted down beside Jeepo, and for fifteen minutes more the two men sat on their heels studying the machine. Atkins was the first to speak.

"Perhaps we could make the frame of the bicycle out of wood; then we'd only have to buy the sprocket mechanism," Atkins said in a tentative voice.

"But that's the part which is most expensive," Jeepo said.

For perhaps another ten minutes they squatted motionless. With a wordless mutual understanding they demonstrated to one another six or eight alternative ways of making the pump work, and discarded them all. Each shake of the head upset the headman and elders profoundly.

It was dusk before they solved the problem, and it was Jeepo who came up with the solution. He suddenly stood bolt upright, walked over to the bicycle, remounted, and began to pedal furiously. Water gushed out of the outflow of the pump. Jeepo looked back over his shoulder and started to shout at Atkins in a loud and highly disrespectful voice in which there was the sound of discovery. It took Atkins another five minutes to understand fully what Jeepo was proposing.

It was the height of simplicity. What he proposed was that a treadmill be built which could be turned by the rear wheel of an ordinary bicycle fitted into a light bamboo frame. What this meant was that a farmer

with a single bicycle could put the bicycle in the bamboo rack, mount it, and pedal. The rear wheel would drive the pump with an efficiency almost as great as Atkins's original model. When anyone needed to use the bike, he could simply pick it up from the rack and ride away.

"This man has made a very great discovery," Atkins said solemnly to the headman and the elders. "Without Jeepo's help my idea would have been useless. What I propose is that we draw up a document giving Jeepo one half of the profits which might come from this invention."

The headman looked at Jeepo and then commenced talking to the elders in a solemn voice. Atkins grasped that the headman had never heard of a binding legal document between a white man and a Sarkhanese. After several minutes of consultation the headman turned to Atkins. "Do you propose that you and Jeepo will begin to build such pumps?" the headman asked.

"Yes. I would like to enter into business with Jeepo. We will open a shop to build this kind of a pump, and we will sell it to whoever will buy. If the customer does not have the money, we will agree that he can pay off the cost of the pump over a three-year period. But don't get the idea that Jeepo will be paid by me for doing nothing. He must work as the foreman of the shop, and he will have to work hard. Not any harder than I work, but as hard as I do."

One of the elders broke in excitedly. He pointed out that it was very unlikely that a white man would work as hard as Jeepo. He had never seen a white man work with his hands before, and what guarantee could they have that Atkins would work as hard? Another of the elders agreed, pointing out that this looked like the trick of a white man to get cheap labour from a Sarkhanese artisan. Both were firmly opposed to Jeepo entering into the partnership.

During all this discussion, Jeepo did not speak, but went on tinkering with the mechanism. When the two elders had finished talking, he turned round and came through the mud of the rice paddy to where the group was standing.

"I have listened to what you foolish old men have been saying," Jeepo said, his voice harsh with anger. "This American is different from other white men. He knows how to work with his hands. He built this machine with his own fingers and his own brain. You people do not understand such things. But men that work with their hands and

muscles understand one another. Regardless of what you say, I will enter into business with this man if he will have me."

There was a quick flush of shame on the headman's face. "I think that Jeepo is correct," he said. "This man can be trusted. I will now draw up the document which will assure that he and Jeepo share the profits and the work equally."

"And the document should say that neither I nor the American shall license or patent the idea of the pump," Jeepo said. "We will make the idea available to anyone who can make it. But on the ones we make, we deserve the profit. That is the way of working men."

Jeepo looked at Atkins. Atkins was pleased, and he nodded.

"Also, when we have made some pumps and sold them we will print little books and will show others how to do it," Atkins said. "We will send them round the whole of Sarkhan, and the village of Chang 'dong will become famous for its mechanical skills."

Two days later Jeepo and Atkins had rented a large old rice warehouse on the edge of Chang 'dong and hired twelve workers. Then they drove into Haidho, bought used tools and supplies, and carted them back to the warehouse. In a week the plant was in full operation. Over the entrance to the warehouse a small sign written in Sarkhanese said: "The Jeepo-Atkins Company, Limited." Inside the warehouse was a scene of incredible and frantic effort. Jeepo and Atkins worked eighteen to twenty hours a day. They trained the Sarkhanese; they installed a small forge which glowed red-hot most of the day; they tested materials; they hammered; they swore; and several times a day they lost their tempers and ranted at one another. Their arguments, for some reason, caused the Sarkhanese workmen a great deal of pleasure, and it was not until several months had passed that Atkins realized why—no Sarkhanese had ever before seen one of his own kind arguing fairly and honestly, and with a chance of success, with a white man.

Within a week Emma Atkins had moved their belongings to a small house in Chang 'dong. She bustled about her home and through the village, and every day at noon she and several of the village women brought two huge casseroles of rice and chicken to the warehouse and all the men ate from them.

Once a technical adviser from the American Embassy called at the warehouse and watched quietly for several hours. The next day the

counsellor of the Embassy called. Taking Atkins to one side, he pointed out that for white men to work with their hands, and especially in the countryside, lowered the reputation of all white men. He appealed to Atkins's pride to give up this project. Moreover, he pointed out that the French, most experienced of colonizers, had never allowed the Sarkhanese to handle machinery. When Atkins had determined that Ambassador MacWhite knew nothing of this visit, his reply was brief, but it was pointed, and the counsellor drove away in anger. Atkins returned joyfully to his work in the warehouse.

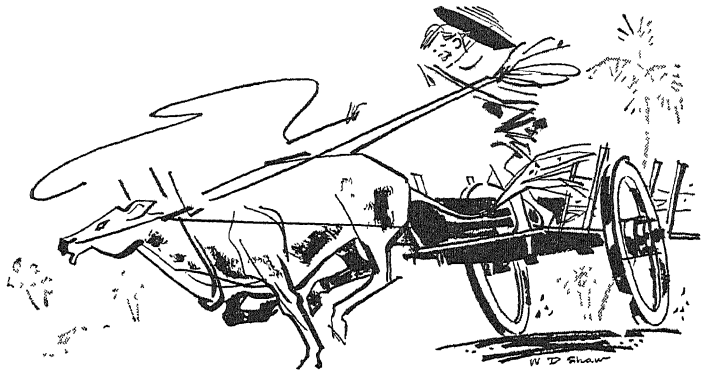
At the end of six weeks they had manufactured twenty-three pumps. When the twenty-fourth pump was finished, Atkins called all the men together. He and Jeepo then outlined what now had to be done. Jeepo did most of the talking. "This is the difficult part," Jeepo started quietly. "You have worked hard and well to build these pumps—now you must sell them. Each of you will now take two of these pumps as samples, and go out and take orders for more. For each pump that you sell you will get a ten per cent commission."

Some of the men did not understand what a commission was. There was a confused five minutes while Atkins and Jeepo explained, and when they were finished the prospective engineer-salesmen were smiling cheerfully. When the discussion was over, twelve contracts were laid out on a table; and each of the Sarkhanese signed a contract between himself and The Jeepo-Atkins Company, Limited.

The next morning twelve ox-carts were lined up outside the warehouse. Two of the pumps were carefully laid out on beds of straw in each of these carts. By noon the twelve salesmen had left for all parts of the province.

Now the waiting began. Everyone in the village realized that everything rested on the persuasiveness of the engineer-salesmen and the performance of the bicycle-powered pump. If no orders were placed, Atkins would have to leave, and the excitement of the factory would disappear. The people drifted in to watch Jeepo and Atkins at work, and many of them began to help. The tension grew steadily; and when four days had passed and not one of the salesmen had returned, a blanket of gloom as thick as a morning mist settled over the village.

Then on the morning of the fifth day one of the salesmen returned. He drove at a speed which, for an ox-cart, is rare. The ox stumbled



and splashed mud in the air, and the salesman beat the animal with gusto. As the ox laboured up the hill, everyone in the village came to the warehouse to learn what would happen. When the cart, covered with mud, drew to a halt, there was a low murmur. They could all see that it was empty. The driver got down slowly, fully aware of his importance. He walked over calmly and stood before his two employers.

"I have the pleasure to inform you, sirs, that I have done wrong," he began, a grin on his face. "You told me that I should bring back the two samples, but I was unable to do it. I have taken orders for eight pumps. But two of my customers insisted that I deliver the pumps at once. Because their paddies were in desperate need of water and the crops might have been ruined, I reluctantly gave them the pumps. I hope I have not made a mistake."

There was a deep sigh from the crowd and everyone turned and looked at Jeepo and Atkins. These two squat, ugly, grease-spattered men stared at one another for a moment, and then let out shouts of joy. Jeepo hugged Atkins. Atkins hugged Jeepo, and then Jeepo hugged Mrs. Atkins. Then everyone in the village hugged everyone else. For several hours an improvised party involved the entire village.

The next morning the village was up early, but not as early as Atkins and Jeepo. As the people went down to the warehouse, they heard the clank of hammers and wrenches. They peered into the dim interior of the warehouse and smiled at one another. Atkins and Jeepo were in the midst of a terrible argument over a modification of the pump. Emma

Atkins was laying out a huge breakfast in front of the two men, and they were ignoring it as they continued their argument.

EMMA ATKINS was a simple and straightforward person. She was not a busybody; but she had learned that when she wanted to know something the best way to find out was to ask a direct question. She had been in Chang 'dong only two weeks when she asked an unanswerable question.

She was working in her kitchen with two of her Sarkhanese neighbours, trying to make a jam of small guava which grew in the jungle. The glowing charcoal stove and the sweet aroma of the bubbling fruit gave the kitchen a cosy and homey atmosphere. Emma felt good. She had just finished telling her neighbours how a kitchen was equipped in America; then through the open window, she saw an old lady of Chang 'dong hobble by, and the question flashed across her mind.

She turned to the two women and spoke slowly, for the Sarkhanese language was new to her. "Why is it that all the old people of Chang 'dong are bent over?" Emma asked. "Every older person I have seen is bent over and walks as if his back is hurting."

"It is just that old people become bent," one of them answered. "That's the natural thing which happens to older people when they have worked in the wet fields and carried heavy burdens all their lives."

Emma was not satisfied, but she did not pursue the problem then. Instead, she kept her eyes open. By the time the rainy season was over, she had observed that almost every person over sixty in the village walked with a perpetual stoop.

When the monsoon ended, the older people in the village began to sweep out their own homes, the paths leading from their houses to the road, and finally the road itself. They used a broom made of palm fronds. It had a short handle, maybe two feet long, and naturally they bent over even more than usual as they swept. And from the way they grimaced, she realized that this intensified stoop was extremely painful.

One day, as Emma was watching the wrinkled and stooped woman from the next house sweep the road, she had an idea. She went out to talk to the woman. "Grandmother, I think I know why your back remains so twisted and painful," she said. "It's because you do so much sweeping bent over that short broom. When people become old their

muscles and bones are not as flexible as when they were young."

"Wife of the engineer, I do not think it is so," the old lady answered softly. "The old people of Sarkhan have always had bent backs."

"Yes, and I'll bet that sweeping for hours every day with a short-handled broom is one reason why," Emma said. "Why don't you put a long handle on the broom and see how it works?"

The old woman looked puzzled. "Brooms are not meant to have long handles," she said matter-of-factly. "I have never seen a broom with a long handle, and even if the wood were available, I do not think we would waste it on long handles for brooms. Wood is a very scarce thing in Chang 'dong."

Emma knew when to drop a conversation. She had long ago discovered that people don't stop doing traditional things merely because they're irrational. That evening Emma had a talk with Homer.

"Homer, have you noticed the bent backs of the old people in this village?" Emma asked.

"Nope, I haven't," Homer said, washing down a bowl of rice with a bottle of beer. "But if you say they're bent, I'll believe it. What about it?"

"Well, don't just say 'What about it,'" Emma said angrily. "Imagine the agony those old people go through



with their backs perpetually bent. I suppose some of it is arthritis, but they keep making it worse."

"All right, all right, Emma. What are we going to do about it?"

"Well, the first thing we're going to do is get longer broom handles," Emma said with heat.

However, Emma found that it was difficult to get longer handles. Wood of any kind was indeed scarce in that area, and the handles the Sarkhanese used for their brooms came from a reed with a strong stem about two feet long. For centuries this reed had been used. It was traditional for brooms to have short handles, and to be used exclusively by people too old to work in the rice fields. But Emma wasn't bound by centuries of tradition, and she began to look for a substitute for the short broom handle.

It would have been simple, of course, to have imported wooden poles, but long ago Homer had taught her that only things that people did for themselves would really change their behaviour. Emma set about researching her problem.

It was a frustrating task. She tried to join several of the short reeds together to make a long broomstick. This failed. Every kind of local material she used to try to lengthen the broom handles failed.

Emma refused to be defeated. She widened the scope of her search, until one day she found what she was after. Accompanied by Homer she was driving the jeep down a steep mountain road about forty miles from Chang 'dong. Suddenly she jammed on the brakes. Lining one side of the road for perhaps twenty feet was a reed very similar to the short reed that grew in Chang 'dong—except that this reed had a strong stalk that rose five feet into the air before it thinned out.

"Homer," she ordered her husband, "climb out and dig me up half a dozen of those reeds. But don't disturb the roots."

When she got back to Chang 'dong, she planted the reeds beside her house and tended them carefully. Then, one day, when several of her neighbours were in her house she casually cut a tall reed, bound the usual coconut fronds to it, and began to sweep. The women were aware that something was unusual, but for several minutes they could not work out what was wrong. Then one of the women spoke.

"She sweeps with her back straight," the woman said in surprise. "I have never seen such a thing."

Emma did not say a word. She continued to sweep right past them, out on to the front porch, and then down the walk. The dust and debris flew in clouds; everyone watching was aware of the greater efficiency of being able to sweep standing up.

Emma returned to her house and began to prepare tea for her guests. She did not speak to them about the broom, but when they left, it was on the front porch, and all her guests eyed it carefully.

The next day when Emma swept off her porch, there were three old grandmothers who watched from a distance. When she had finished Emma leaned her long-handled broom against the clump of reeds which she had brought down from the hills. The lesson was clear.

The next day, perhaps ten older people, including a number of men, watched Emma as she swept. This time when she had finished, an old man, his back bent so that he scurried with a crab-like motion, came over to Emma. "Wife of the engineer, I would like to know where I might get a broom handle like the one you have," the man said. "I am not sure that our short-handled brooms have bent our backs like this, but I am sure that your way of sweeping is a more powerful way."

Emma told him to help himself to one of the reeds growing beside the house.

The old man hesitated. "I will take one and thank you; but if I take one, others may also ask, and soon your reeds will be gone."

"It is nothing to worry about, old man," Emma said. "There are many such reeds in the hills. I found these by the stream at Nanghsa. Your people could walk up there and bring back as many as the village could use in a year on the back of one water buffalo."

The old man did not cut one of Emma's reeds. Instead he turned and hurried back to the group of older people. They talked rapidly, and several hours later Emma saw them heading for the hills with a water buffalo in front of them.

Soon after, Homer completed his work in Chang 'dong, and he and Emma moved to a small village about seventy miles to the east. It was not until four years later, when they were back home in Pittsburgh, that Emma learned the final results of her broom-handle project. One day she got a letter in a large handsome yellow bamboo-paper envelope. Inside, written in an exquisite script, was a letter from the headman of Chang 'dong.

Wife of the engineer:

I am writing you to thank you for a thing that you did for the old people of Chang 'dong. For many centuries, longer than any man can remember, we have always had old people with bent backs in this village. And in every village that we know of the old people have always had bent backs. We had always thought this was a part of growing old, and it was one of the reasons that we dreaded old age. But, wife of the engineer, you have changed all that. By the lucky accident of your long-handled broom you showed us a new way to sweep. It is a small thing, but it has changed the lives of our old people. For four years, ever since you have left, we have been using the long reeds for broom handles.

You will be happy to know that today there are far fewer bent backs in the village of Chang 'dong. Today the backs of many of our old people are straight and firm. No longer are their bodies so painful during the months of the monsoon. This is a small thing, I know, but for our people it is an important thing.

I know you are not of our religion, wife of the engineer, but perhaps you will be pleased to know that on the outskirts of the village we have constructed a small shrine in your memory. It is a simple affair; at the foot of the altar are these words: *In memory of the woman who unbent the backs of our people.* And in front of the shrine there is a stack of the old short reeds which we used to use.

Again, wife of the engineer, we thank you and we think of you.

"What does he mean, 'lucky accident'?" Emma said to Homer. "Why, I looked all over the place for three months before I found those long reeds. That was no accident." Homer did not look up at her from the letter. He knew that the indignation in her voice was false. He knew that if he looked now he would see tears glittering in the corners of her eyes. He waited a decent amount of time; when he raised his head she was just pushing her handkerchief back into the pocket of her apron.

A Factual Epilogue by the Authors

THE CHAPTER you have just read is a work of fiction. However, we would not wish any reader to think that it is wholly imaginary. For it is not; it is based on fact. The authors have taken part in the events in South-east Asia which inspired this episode, and the book from which it is drawn.

The character of Homer Atkins is based on an actual American working among the back-country people, and known to the authors. There are others like him; but they are a wild exception to the rule, and by and large they are not beloved of American officials in the various Asian capitals.

While a few Americans like Atkins—and many more Russians—roam the wilds, most Americans are restricted, both by their own official tethers and by language barriers, to communion with each other. We Americans stand there relatively mute, locked in the cities, misunderstanding the temper and the needs of the people, while the Communists march from one victory to another.

As we meant to show by the story of the ugly engineer, we have been offering the Asiatic nations the wrong kind of help, spending vast sums on "big" projects—dams, military roads, irrigation systems—while overlooking far more helpful and almost costless smaller ones.

Native economists listed for the authors the projects most urgently needed in their countries. They included improvement of chicken and pig breeding, small pumps which do not need expensive replacement parts, technical instruction in commercial fishing, food canning and seed improvement, and a small, village-size paper-making plant (for illiteracy in many countries is perpetuated by the scarcity of paper).

These are projects into which the vast reservoir of American skill and ingenuity could easily be channelled. They are the small steps which alone can lead to larger steps of industrialization, and they must be realized before Communism will lose its appeal.

But we have so lost sight of our own past that we are trying to sell guns and money alone, forgetting that it was the quest for the dignity of freedom that was responsible for our own way of life.

All over Asia the basic American ethic is revered, and imitated when possible. To win the struggle with Communism we must, while helping Asia towards self-sufficiency, show by example that America is still the America of freedom and hope and knowledge and law.



The IVY TREE

A condensation of the book by MARY STEWART

Illustrations by Walter Wyles

"The Ivy Tree" is published by Hodder and Stoughton, London

"Believe me," said the girl, "it's very odd to be told one has a double." Even more odd was the proposition that Connor Winslow put to this stranger who so remarkably resembled his cousin Annabel. It was to lead her to a secluded farm near the ruins of Forrest Hall, to a dying old man beset by the problems of inheritance, to a love-affair of the distant past, to an atmosphere where hate and intrigue were ready to burst into violence.

This is the story of an impersonation, told by the impostor, a young woman who finds herself caught up all too perilously in the tangled web we weave, "when first we practise to deceive."

"The story is told with a rare feeling for words, with the hallmark of literary craftsmanship stamped on every page. For my money, it has the ideal thriller blend of plots, suspense, character-drawing, and good writing." —*Daily Express*



Chapter One

I MIGHT have been alone in a painted landscape. The sky was still and blue, and the high cauliflower clouds over towards the south seemed to hang without movement. Against their curded bases the fells curved and folded, blue foothills of the Pennines giving way to the misty green of pasture. In all that windless, wide landscape, I could see no sign of man's hand, except the lines of the dry stone walls, and the arrogant stride of the great Wall which Hadrian had driven from coast to coast across Northumberland, nearly two thousand years ago.

The blocks of the Roman-cut stone were warm against my back. Where I sat, the Wall ran high along a ridge. To the right, the cliff fell sheer away to the long reach of Crag Lough, now quiet as glass in the sun. To the left, the sweeping, magnificent view to the Pennines. Ahead of me, ridge after ridge running west, with the Wall cresting each curve like a stallion's mane.

I sat against the Wall in the sun, and thought. Nothing definite, but if I had been asked to define my thoughts they would all have come to one word. England. This turf, this sky, the heartsease in the grass; the

old lines of ridge and furrow, and the still older ghosts of Roman road and Wall; the ordered, spare beauty of the northern fells; all this, now, mine. I had it to myself, I and two sleeping lambs, and the curlew away up above. I might have been the first and only woman in it; Eve, sitting there in the sunlight and dreaming of Adam

"Annabel!"

He spoke from close behind me, and I whirled half round.

Not Adam; just a young man in shabby, serviceable country tweeds. He was tall, with that whippy look to him that told you he would be an ugly customer in a fight—and with something else about him that made it sufficiently obvious that he would not need much excuse to fight. Possibly it is a look that is inbred with the Irish, for there could be no doubt about this young man's ancestry. He had the almost excessive good looks of a certain type of Irishman, black hair, eyes of startling blue, and charm in the long, mobile mouth. He had a stick in one hand, and a collie hung watchfully at his heels, a beautiful creature with the same kind of springy, rapier grace as the master, and the same air of self-confident good breeding.

Not Adam, no. But quite possibly the serpent.

He took in his breath in a long sound like a hiss.

"So it is you! I thought I couldn't be mistaken! *It is you* The old man always insisted you couldn't be dead, and that you'd come back one day . . . and by God, who'd have thought he was right?"

He was speaking quite softly, but just what was underlying that very pleasant voice I can't quite describe. The dog felt it too. I saw its ears flatten, and the thick ruff stirred on its neck.

I hadn't moved. I sat there, dumb and stiff as the stones themselves, gaping up at the man.

The quiet voice swept on.

"And what have you come back for? Tell me that! Just what do you propose to do? Walk straight home and hang up your hat? Because if that's the idea, my girl, you can think again! It's not your grandfather you'll be dealing with now, you know, it's me . . . I'm in charge, sweetheart, and I'm staying that way. So be warned."

I did manage to speak then, in a feeble sort of croak that sounded half paralysed with fright.

"I—I beg your pardon?"

"I saw you get off the bus at Chollerford, and I followed you. I waited to let you get up here, because I wanted to talk to you. Alone." The voice was edged now with what sounded like danger.

I said abruptly, and a good deal too loudly: "Look, you're making a mistake! I don't——"

"*Mistake?* Don't try and give me that!" He made a slight movement that managed to convey a startling menace. "You've got a nerve, haven't you? After all these years . . . walking back as calm as you please, and in broad daylight. It doesn't necessarily have to be midnight, does it, when you and I go walking at the edge of a cliff with water at the bottom? Remember? You'd never have come mooning up here alone, would you, darling, if you'd known I was coming too?"

This brought me to my feet, really frightened now. He took a step towards me. For a mad moment I thought I would turn and run; but there was only the steep broken slope, and the Wall, and the sheer cliff to the water. And there was the dog.

He was saying sharply, and I knew the question mattered: "Had you been down to the farm already? To Whitescar? Had you?"

Somehow I managed to grab at the fraying edges of panic. I said flatly:

"I don't know what you're talking about! As far as I'm concerned you're behaving like a dangerous lunatic! I've no idea who you think you're talking to, but I never saw you before in my life!"

The effect was as if I'd stopped him with a charge shot. I saw his eyes widen in startled disbelief, then a sort of flicker of uncertainty went across his face, taking the menace out of it.

I followed up my advantage.

I said, rudely, because I had been frightened, "And now will you please go away and leave me alone?"

He didn't move. He stood there staring, then said, still in that edged tone that was somehow smudged by doubt:

"Are you trying to pretend that you don't recognize me? I'm your cousin Connor."

"I told you I never saw you in my life. And I never had a cousin Connor." I took a deep, steadying breath. "It seems I'm lucky in that. You must be a very happy and united family. But you'll excuse me if I don't stay to get to know you better. Good-bye."

"Look, please don't go! I'm terribly sorry if I've made a mistake!" He had dwindled now simply into a good-looking young man, with doubt melting on his face into horrified apology. "What on earth can you think of me? I, well, I thought you were someone I used to know."

I said, very drily: "I rather gathered that."

"Look, please don't be angry. You could be her, you really could. Oh, perhaps there are differences, but I could still swear——"

He stopped abruptly. He was still breathing rather fast. It was plain he had indeed suffered a considerable shock.

I said: "And I'll swear too, if you like. I don't know you. My name isn't Arabella, it's Mary. Mary Grey. And I've never even been to this part of the world before."

"You're American, aren't you? Your voice. It's very slight, but——"

"Canadian."

He said slowly: "*She* went to the States"

I said violently and angrily: "Now, look here——"

"No, please, I didn't mean it!"

He smiled then, for the first time. The charm was beginning to surface. "Please forgive me! I must have scared you, looming over you like a threat from the past."

"My past," I retorted, "never produced anything quite like this! That was some welcome your poor prodigal was going to get, wasn't it? I—er, I did gather you weren't exactly going to kill the fatted calf for Arabella?"

"Annabel. Well, no, perhaps I wasn't." He looked away from me, down at the stretch of gleaming water. "You'd gather I was trying to frighten her, with all that talk."

It was a statement, not a question, but it had a curiously tentative effect.

I said: "I did, rather."

"You didn't imagine I meant any of that nonsense, I hope?"

I said calmly: "Not knowing the circumstances, I have no idea. But I definitely formed the impression that this cliff was a great deal too high, and the road was a great deal too far away."

"Did you now?"

There, at last, was the faintest undercurrent of an Irish lilt. He turned his head, and our eyes met.

I was angry to find that I was slightly breathless, though it was obvious that, if this damnably dramatic young man really had intended murder five minutes ago, he had abandoned the intention. He was offering me his cigarette-case, and saying, with a beautifully-calculated lift of one eyebrow: "You've forgiven me? You're not going to bolt straight away?"

I ought, of course, to have turned and gone then and there. But, as my fright had subsided, my curiosity had taken over. It isn't every day that one is recognized—attacked—for a "double."

"Are you staying near by?" he asked, as I accepted a cigarette and sat down again. "No, I suppose you can't be, or everyone would be talking You've a face well known in these parts. You're just up here for the day, then? Over here on holiday?"

"In a way. I work in Newcastle, in a café. This is my day off."

"In *Newcastle*? It's odd that you should have come to this part of the world. What brought you up here?"

A little pause.

I said abruptly: "You still don't quite believe me. Do you?" I met his narrow gaze squarely.

"Yes, I believe you. But you mustn't blame me too much for being rude and staring. It's a queer experience, running into the double of someone you knew. After all, Annabel's dead."

It wasn't so much the casual phrasing that was shocking, as the lack of something in his voice that should have been there.

I said uncomfortably: "This can't be pleasant for you, even if you didn't get on with her. She was your cousin, didn't you say?"

"I was going to marry her."

I must have stared with my mouth open for quite five seconds. Then I said feebly: "Really?"

"She ran away, sooner than marry me. Disappeared into the blue eight years ago with nothing but a note from the States to her grandfather to say she was safe. Oh, I admit there'd been a quarrel, and"—a pause, and a little shrug—"well, anyway, she went. How easily do you expect a man to forgive that?"

You? never, I thought. No, a rebuff was the one thing he would never forgive.

I said: "Eight years is a long time, though, to nurse a grudge. After

all, you've probably been happily married to someone else for most of that time."

"I'm not married."

"No?" I must have sounded surprised. He would be all of thirty, and he must, to say the least of it, have had opportunities.

He grinned at my tone. "My half-sister keeps house at Whitescar. She's a wonderful cook and she thinks a lot of me. With Lisa around, I don't need a wife."

"Whitescar, that's your farm, you said?"

"It's more than a farm; it's 'The Winslow place.' We've been there for donkey's ages . . . longer than the local gentry who've built their park round us. Whitescar's a kind of enclave, older than the oldest tree in the park—about a quarter the age of this wall you're sitting on. The Hall tried hard enough to shift us in the old days, and now the Hall's gone, but we're still there You're not listening."

"I am. Go on. What happened to the Hall?"

But he was off at a tangent, still obviously dwelling on my likeness to his cousin. "Have *you* ever lived on a farm?"

"Yes. In Canada. But it's not my thing, I'm afraid."

"What is?"

"Lord, I don't know; that's my trouble. Country life, certainly. A house, gardening, cooking—I've spent the last few years looking after a crippled friend who had a house near Montreal. I was very happy there, but she died six months ago. That was when I decided to come over here. But I've no training, if that's what you mean."

"Horses, now. Do you ride?"

The question was so sudden and seemingly irrelevant that I must have sounded startled. "Horses? Good heavens, no! Why?"

"Just a hangover from your looking like Annabel. She was a witch with horses. She could whisper to them, and then they'd do any blessed thing for her. If she'd been dark like me, instead of blonde, she'd have been taken for a horse-thieving gipsy's changeling."

"Well," I said, "I do know one end of a horse from the other, and on principle I keep clear of both. . . . You know, I wish you'd stop staring."

"I'm sorry. But I—well, I can't leave it alone, this likeness. . . . Of course Annabel was only nineteen when she ran away"

He looked at me so obviously expectant that I laughed. "All right. I'm twenty-seven."

"I told you it was uncanny. Even with that accent of yours. I—it's something one feels one ought not to let pass—as if it was . . . meant."

"What do you mean?"

"Nothing, skip it; I want to hear about you. I still want to know what brought you to Newcastle, and why you were on that bus from Bellingham to Chollerford today, going within a stone's throw of the Winslow land. I refuse to believe that such a likeness is pure chance."

"Yes, of course I see that." I paused for a moment. "You may be right about this likeness not being chance. My people did come from hereabouts, so my grandmother told me."

"Did they now? From Whitescar?"

I shook my head. "I never heard that name, that I remember. Anyway Granny only knew what my great-grandmother told her."

"What brought you back?" His questions were sharp with purpose.

I said, perhaps a little warily: "What brings anyone over? My people are dead, and I'd always promised myself that some day I'd visit the places I'd heard about from Granny, and maybe—if I liked it—I'd stay." I laughed. "But I hadn't seen myself coming back quite like this. I—well, I was left pretty badly off. I got my fare together, and enough to tide me over till I got a job. The New World can be a bit wearing when you're on your own, and I thought I might fit in better here."

"Because your roots are here?" He smiled at my look. "They are, you know. There must have been someone, some Winslow, 'way back in the last century, who went to Canada from here"

"Perhaps."

"Well," he said, with that charmingly quizzical lift of the eyebrow that was perhaps just a little too well practised, "that does make us cousins, doesn't it? It's as plain as a pikestaff that you must be a Winslow. You're the Winslow type, it's unmistakable—that fair hair, and your eyes that queer colour between green and grey, and those lovely dark eyelashes When I first came to Whitescar I just took Annabel for granted as the most beautiful girl I'd ever seen."

I said, to cover my embarrassment: "You talk of me as being a 'Winslow type.' Where do you come in? You don't seem to conform."

"Oh, I'm pure Irish, like my mother." The white teeth showed. "She

was from Galway. I've her colouring. But the good looks come from the Winslows. We're all beauties."

"Well, well," I said drily, "it's a pity I haven't a better claim, isn't it?" I stubbed out my cigarette, then flicked it out over the cliff's edge. "There is . . . one thing I do remember, I think. It came back as we were talking. I'm sure I remember Granny talking about a forest. Is there something near your 'Winslow place,' perhaps, that——?"

"Forrest!" He looked excited. "Indeed there is! I told you that Whitescar was a kind of enclave in the park belonging to the local bigwigs. That's Forrest Park. The big house was Forrest Hall."

"Was? Oh, yes, you said the Hall had 'gone.' What happened?"

"It burnt down."

"Burnt down? What happened? Was anyone killed?"

"Oh, Lord, no. Everyone got out all right. It started in Mrs. Forrest's bedroom in the small hours. Her poodle raised the place. The bed was alight by the time Forrest got there. He managed to drag the bedclothes off her—she was unconscious—and carry her downstairs." A sideways look. "They were damned lucky to get the insurance paid up, if you ask me. There was talk of cigarettes, and of an empty brandy-bottle in her room. Heaven knows there'd been enough gossip about the Forrests . . . there always is, when a couple doesn't get on. I liked him, so did everybody else for that matter, except the old woman, Miss Wragg, who'd come to look after Crystal Forrest when she decided to be a chronic invalid."

"Decided to be—that's an odd way of putting it."

"Believe me, Crystal Forrest was a damned odd sort of woman. How any man ever—oh well, they say he married her for her money anyway. If it was true, he certainly paid for it, and actually there can't have been much. After the fire they went to live in Florence—but then she went right round the bend. Till she died, two years ago, she'd been in one psychiatric clinic after another, and that took everything. When Forrest got back eventually, to finish selling up here, there was no money left."

"He's back, then?" I asked idly.

"No, he's not here now. He has this villa near Florence. He only came over to sell the place. The Forestry Commission have the parkland, and they've planted the lot. The Hall's gone completely, of course.

But the Rudds—they were the couple who used to work at the Hall—the Rudds have moved across to the other side of the Park, where the West Lodge and the stables are. Johnny Rudd runs the place now as a sort of small-holding, and when Forrest was over here last year, he and Johnny got the old gardens going again, as a market-garden. Well? How's that for a dramatic story of your homeland, Mary Grey?"

Then, accusingly, as I was silent: "You weren't even listening!"

"Oh, I was. You made a good story of it." I looked round me for my handbag, and picked it up from the foot of the Wall. "I'll have to go now. I'd forgotten the time. My bus——"

"Look, you can't just go like this!" He made a sudden little movement almost as if he would have detained me. He spoke quickly, with a kind of urgency. "I'm serious. Don't go yet. I can run you back."

"I wouldn't think of letting you. No, really, it's been——"

"Don't tell me that it's been 'interesting.' It's been a hell of a lot more than that. It's been important."

I stared at him. "What *do* you mean?"

"I told you. This sort of thing isn't pure chance. It was meant. We can't simply walk away in opposite directions now and forget it."

"Why not?"

"Why not?" He said it almost explosively. "Because—oh hell, I can't explain, I haven't had time to think, but tell me the address of this place where you work." He had produced a used envelope and a pencil from his pockets while he spoke. When I didn't answer, he looked up sharply. "Well?"

I said slowly: "I'd rather not. Please try to understand."

"I don't begin to understand! I wasn't only joking when I said we were long-lost cousins"

"Can't you grasp this? Whitescar and Winslows and all the rest may mean a lot to you, but why should they mean anything to me? I've been on my own a good long time now, and I like it that way."

"A job in a café? Waiting? Cash desk? Washing up? You? I'm sorry if I'm rude. But you can't just walk away and—after all, you told me you were nearly broke."

I said, after a pause: "You—you take your family responsibilities very seriously, don't you, Mr. Winslow? Am I to take it you were thinking of offering me a job?"

He said slowly: "Do you know, I might, at that." He laughed, and added lightly: "Blood being thicker than water, Mary Grey."

I must have sounded as much at a loss as I felt. "Well, it's very nice of you, but really . . . you can hardly expect me to take you up on it, can you, even if our families might just possibly have been connected a hundred years or so ago?" I smiled and said, "I must go. Thank you for your offer of help. It was kind of you. And now this really is good-bye"

I held out my hand.

To my relief, after a moment's hesitation, he took it quite simply, in a sort of courteous recognition of defeat.

"Good-bye, then, Mary Grey. I'm sorry. All the best."

As I left him I was very conscious of him staring after me.

Chapter Two

THE woman was there again. For the last three days, punctually at the same time, she had pushed her way through the crowded aisles of the Kasbah Coffee House, and had found herself a seat in a corner. I myself had not noticed her until she was pointed out to me. But Norma, from her position behind the Espresso machine, had observed her, and thought her "queer."

"It's you she's watching, love, take it from me. Not so's *you'd* see it, but every time you're looking away there she is, staring."

"Stares at *me*, d'you mean?"

"That's what I'm telling you. Yes, that woman over there. The one with the face like blotting-paper."

I turned to look. It was true. As my eyes met hers, the woman looked quickly down at her cup. I lowered my tray of dirty crockery slowly on to the bar-counter, and considered her for a moment.

She could have been anything between thirty-five and forty, and the first adjective I myself would have applied to her would have been "ordinary," rather than "queer." She wore goodish, but badly-chosen, country clothes, and a minimum of make-up. Under the out-of-date felt hat her dark hair was worn plainly in a bun. Her eyebrows were thick and well marked, but untidy-looking over badly-set brown eyes.

The outer corners of brows, eyes and mouth were pulled down slightly, giving the dull face its heavy, almost discontented expression.

I saw at once what Norma had meant by that last, graphic phrase. One got the curious impression that the woman only just missed being good-looking; that the features were somehow blurred. She could have been a bad copy of a portrait I already knew; but even as I tried to place the impression, it slid away from me. I had never, to my recollection, seen her before.

NEXT day she was there again. And the next. Now that I knew, I could feel it, the steady gaze that followed me about the place.

When the bar-counter was quiet, I paused by it, and said to Norma: "She's still at it, that woman. And I'm tired of it. I'm going over to speak to her and ask her if she thinks she's ever met me."

"Well, you needn't bother," said Norma. "I've been trying to get a minute to tell you ever since a quarter to six. She's been asking Mavis who you were. Said she thought she knew you, and asked if you came from these parts. So Mavis said who you were and that you'd come from Canada and had a fancy to stay up North for a bit, seeing as your family'd come from round here, and that you were just working here temp'ry, like, till you found a proper job. Mavis didn't see anything wrong in telling her, a woman like that, sort of respectable."

I looked unseeingly down at the tray in my hand. Fleetingly I was there again: the Roman Wall in the sunshine, the smell of thyme, and, facing me, that dangerous hard blue stare

I said abruptly: "I want to know who she is. Look, Norma, she's got a dress-box with her, and it's labelled. Will you ask Mavis to go over—any excuse will do—and get a look at that label?"

"Sure. Anything for a spot of excitement."

When I got back from the kitchen, the corner table was empty. Mavis was at the counter with Norma. I asked, a little anxiously: "What was the name?"

"Dermott. A Miss Dermott."

I said sharply: "Did you see the address?"

Mavis was looking at me curiously. "Yes, I did. Some address near Bellingham, a farm. White-something Farm, it was. Mary, what——?"

"Whitescar?"

"Yes, that was it. Then you *do* know her?"

"No. I've never seen her in my life. But she must know someone I know, that's all. I—I've met someone from Whitescar . . . she must have heard I worked here, and came to see. But what an odd way of doing it. Oh, well," I managed a smile, speaking lightly. "That's *that* little mystery solved, and nothing to it after all. Thanks a lot, Mavis."

I could see the likeness now: the poorish copy of that dramatically handsome face, the sepia print of Connor Winslow's Glorious Technicolor. *"My half-sister keeps house at Whitescar"* She would be some half-dozen years older than he, with none of Connor's Winslow good looks. But the shadowy likeness was there, to be glimpsed now and then by anyone who knew.

"I wouldn't let it upset you, dear," said Norma. "If she's here tomorrow I'd walk right up to her, and just ask her straight out what she's playing at."

"All right," I said, "I will."

But I wasn't there next afternoon to watch for her coming. I gave my notice in that night.

Chapter Three

WHEN the tentative, almost nervous knock came at my bedroom door I knew who it was even before I looked up from my packing. As clearly as if the thick door were made of glass, I could see the toffee-brown eyes and the drawn-down corners of the soft, obstinate-looking mouth.

I hesitated. She must know I was here. I had seen no reason for silence. As the rapping came again, I went silently across the room, pulled open a drawer of the dressing-chest, and said, on a note of inquiry: "Yes? Come in."

When the door opened, I had my back to it. I turned, then stopped short, my brows lifted, my face registering, I hoped, nothing but surprise.

She said, standing squarely in the doorway: "Miss Grey?"

"Yes? I'm afraid——" I paused, and let recognition dawn, and with it

puzzlement. "Wait a moment. I think—don't I know your face? You were in the Kasbah café this afternoon, weren't you?"

"That's right. My name's Dermott, Lisa Dermott." She pronounced the name Continental fashion, "*Leeza.*" She paused to let it register, then added: "From Whitescar."

I said, still on that puzzled note: "How do you do, Miss—Mrs.?—Dermott. Is there something I can do for you?"

She said flatly: "My brother met you up on the Roman Wall on Sunday."

"On the Ro—oh, yes, of course I remember. A man spoke to me. Winslow, he was called." I added slowly: "Whitescar. Yes, that's where he said he came from. We had a rather—odd conversation."

She sat down solidly, uninvited, in the only chair my wretched little room boasted. "I'm Miss Dermott," she said. "I'm not married. Con Winslow's my half-brother."

"Yes, I believe he mentioned you."

"He told me all about *you*," she said. "I didn't believe him, but he was right. Even given the eight years, it's amazing."

"You see the resemblance he talked about?"

"Certainly. I didn't actually know Annabel. I came to Whitescar after she'd gone. But the old man used to keep a regular gallery of her photographs in his room. The likeness is uncanny, believe me."

"It seems I must believe you. The 'old man' you spoke of . . . would that be Mr. Winslow's father?"

"His great-uncle. He was Annabel's grandfather."

I sat down on the edge of the table. Then I said, so abruptly that it sounded rude: "So what, Miss Dermott? You say I'm the image of this Annabel of yours. I'll accept that. I repeat: so what?"

"I don't follow you."

"This interest of yours in me goes far beyond mere curiosity," I said. "I don't like it. I didn't like the way your brother talked, and I don't like being watched. You're 'interested' in the sense of 'interested parties,' aren't you? You've something at stake."

She sounded as calm as ever. "I suppose it's natural for you to be so hostile But if you'll just be a little patient with me, I'll explain. . . ."

All this time she had been watching me, but now her gaze shifted and came to rest on my open handbag from which had spilt a lipstick,

a comb, and a small gold cigarette-lighter whose convoluted initials caught the light quite clearly: M.G. Then her eyes came back to my face.

"Well?" I said.

She hesitated, and for the first time excitement touched the heavy face. "I'll come to the main point first," she said. "You were right in saying that our interest in you was more than the normal curiosity you'd expect the likeness to arouse. You were even right—terribly right —when you said we had 'something at stake.' "

She put her hands flat down on her thighs and leaned forward. "What we want," she said, "is Annabel. She must come back to Whitescar."

The voice was undramatic: the words sensational. I felt my heart give a painful twist. "But isn't Annabel dead?" I said obtusely.

Something flickered behind the woman's eyes. "Yes, she's dead. She can't come back . . . to spoil anything for you . . . or even for us."

I didn't look at her. I said at length, with no expression at all: "You want me to go to Whitescar. As Annabel Winslow."

She leaned back. The basket chair gave a long, gasping creak like a gigantic breath of relief. "Yes," she said, "that's it. We want you to come to Whitescar . . . Annabel."

I laughed then. I couldn't help it; possibly the laughter was as much the result of taut nerves as of the obvious absurdity of her proposal. Firmly I said: "Forgive me, but it—it sounded so theatrical and romantic and impossible when it got put into words. Look, Miss Dermott, you can't be serious! In real life anyone who walks into a family claiming to be a—well, a long-lost heir or something, would merely land in trouble. Think of the lawyers and——"

"That's the whole point. The lawyers wouldn't come into it. You'd not be *claiming* anything from anybody; the only person who'd lose is Julie, and she has enough of her own. Besides, she adored Annabel."

"Julie?"

"Annabel's young cousin. You needn't worry about her, she was only ten or eleven when Annabel went away, and she'll hardly remember enough about her to suspect you. As for the old man, he's never believed Annabel was dead. He'll never even question you."

I was staring at her. "The old man? Who are you talking about?"

"Old Mr. Winslow, her grandfather. He thought the world of her."

"But surely . . . I understood he was dead. I'm sure your brother said on Sunday that he owned the farm now."

She smiled then, genuinely, and for the first time I saw the warmth of real feeling in her face. She looked amused, indulgent, affectionate, as a mother might look when watching the pranks of a naughty but attractive child. "Yes, he would. Poor Con." She didn't take it further, merely adding: "He's old Mr. Winslow's manager. He's not even Mr. Winslow's heir."

"I *see*. Oh, Lord, yes, I see it now."

I got up abruptly, and went over to the window.

"What do you see?"

I said, slowly, staring out at the dark: "Not much, really. Just that Mr. Winslow—Con—wants Whitescar, and that somehow he thinks he can fix it, if I go back there as Annabel. I take it that Julie must be the heir now, if he isn't. But how on earth it's going to help Con to bring back Annabel, and put two people in the way instead of one" I finished heavily: "Oh, Lord, the whole thing's fantastic anyway. I can't think why I've bothered to listen."

"Listen for a little while longer, and you'll understand what Con and I are getting at."

I let her talk. I just leaned my head against the glass, and let the soft unemphatic voice flow on. She told me the recent family history very briefly. Old Matthew Winslow had had two sons: the elder had one daughter, Annabel, who had lived with her parents at Whitescar. When the girl was fourteen, her parents had died of pneumonia, leaving her in her grandfather's care. The younger son, Julie's father, had been killed some years previously in the Battle of Britain, and his widow had soon re-married and gone out, with her small daughter, to live in Kenya. Later, Julie had been sent back to England to school and spent her spring and summer holidays with her grandfather at Whitescar, which she regarded as her English home.

After his elder son's death, Mr. Winslow had found it heavy work to manage the place on his own and had thought of offering a job to Connor Winslow, his great-nephew and only surviving male relative. Connor's father had gone to Ireland to work at a training-stable, and there he had married a Mrs. Dermott, who had a five-year-old daughter, Lisa. A year later, Connor was born, to become the spoiled darling of

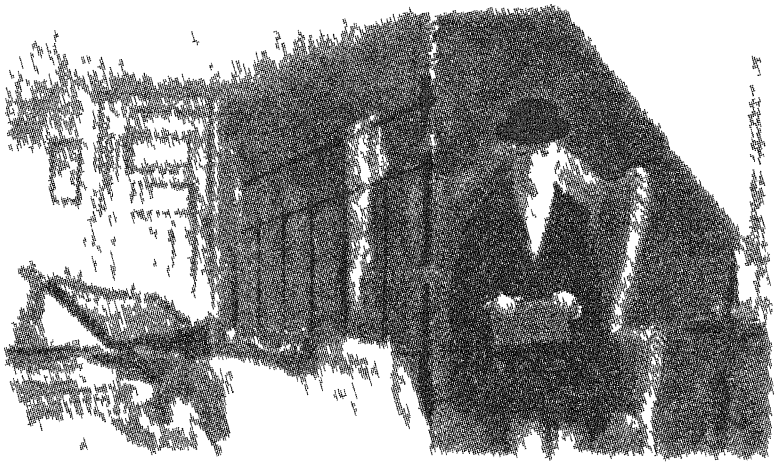
his parents, and also of his half sister. But when Connor was thirteen, his father broke his neck over a big Irish in and-out, and exactly ten months later the inconsolable widow cheerfully married for the third time and relegated her son to the background of her life.

Connor's father had left no money, and it became increasingly obvious that his unsympathetic step-father was not prepared to help him. So when Matthew Winslow wrote out of the blue to ask him, then aged nineteen, to make his home at Whitescar and be trained for farm-management, the boy had gone like an arrow from a bow. He had arrived at Whitescar with the determination to make a place for himself, and stay; a determination that, very soon, hardened into a definite ambition: Whitescar itself It didn't take him long to find out that the place, backed by Matthew Winslow's not inconsiderable income, could be willed any way that the old man wished

So Connor Winslow had set to work He had learned his job, he had worked like a navvy at everything, earning the respect and admiration of the slow, conservative local farmers Once he had made himself indispensable, he had proceeded to charm his great-uncle like a bird off a tree. But charm he never so wisely, he couldn't quite charm Whitescar from him. "Because Con tried, he admits it," said Lisa. "But the old man's as stubborn as the devil. He wanted Annabel to have it after him, and what he wants, goes. The fact that she's dead," she added bitterly, "doesn't make a bit of difference. *He* says she'll come back, and he'll leave everything to Annabel in his will, and the mess'll take years to clear up, and the odds are that Julie's the residuary beneficiary The point is, we just don't know. He won't say a word. But it does seem unfair."

There wasn't much more. Con's next move had been the obvious one If Annabel and Whitescar went together, then he would try to take both. Indeed, he was genuinely (so Lisa told me) in love with her, and an understanding between them was such a satisfactory thing to happen that the old man, who was fond of them both, was delighted

"But," said Lisa, hesitating now and appearing to choose her words, "it went wrong, somehow. I don't know a great deal—Con hasn't said much—but they quarrelled terribly, and she used to try and make him jealous, he says, and, well, Con has a terrible temper. They had a dreadful quarrel one night. She threw him over once and for all, said



she couldn't stay at Whitescar while he was there Then she ran off to tell her grandfather. Of course the old man was furious, and disappointed, and *he* never was one to mince his words, either The result was another dreadful row, and she left that night, without a word to anyone. Of course the old man was too stubborn even to try and find her. Then a month later, her grandfather got a note, postmarked New York. It just said she was quite safe, and she wasn't ever coming back to England again. After that there was nothing until three years later someone sent Mr. Winslow a cutting from a Los Angeles paper describing a train accident in which a lot of people had been killed One of them was a 'Miss Anna Winslow' of no given address, who was thought to be English We made inquiries, and they were all negative. It could have been Annabel. It would certainly be enough, with the long absence, to allow us to presume her dead."

She paused. "That's all."

I turned round.

"And you? Where do you come in?"

"After she'd gone," said Lisa Dermott, "Con remembered me."

She said it quite simply. I looked down at her, sitting stolid and unattractive in the old basket-chair, and said gently: "He got Mr. Winslow to send for you?"

She nodded. "Someone had to run the house, and it seemed too good a chance to miss. But even with the two of us there, doing all that we do, it's no use. You do see it's unjust, don't you?"

"Yes, I see. But I still don't see what you think I can do about it! You want me to go to Whitescar, and somehow or other *that* is going to help Con to become the heir, and owner. How?"

I saw that fugitive look of excitement touch her face once more as she leaned towards me. "You're interested now, aren't you? I thought you would be, when you heard a bit more."

"I'm not. I was interested in your story, I admit, but I never said I was interested in helping to perpetrate a fraud—in your crazy proposition! I'm not!" I found that I was speaking angrily, and made myself smile. "Can you give me any conceivable reason why I should be?"

She looked at me almost blankly. Then said simply: "Why, for money, of course. What other reason is there?"

"For *money*?"

"If you'll forgive me, you appear to need it. You said so, in fact, to my brother; that was one of the reasons why we felt we could approach you." She gave a slight, eloquent glance round the room. "You are a gentlewoman . . . and this room . . . your job at that dreadful café It's worth your while to listen to me. In plain terms, I'm offering you a job, a good one, the job of coming back to Whitescar as Annabel Winslow, and persuading the old man that that is who you are. You will have a home, a position, everything; and eventually a small assured income for life. You call it a fraud: of course it is, but it's not a cruel one. The old man wants you there, and your coming will make him very happy."

"Why did he remove Annabel's photographs? You said earlier that he *used* to keep a 'whole gallery' of them in his room."

"You're very quick." She sounded appreciative. "But don't worry; he still has one in his bedroom. He put the others in a drawer last year, when he had one done of Julie." She eyed me for a moment. "You must come home quickly. He may decide to be reasonable about Annabel's death . . . and to put Julie in her place. Whatever happens, it'll happen soon. It's doubtful if the old man'll see the year out, and I think he's beginning to realize it."

I looked up. "Is he ill?"

"He had a slight stroke three months ago, and he refuses to take very much care. He may have another at almost any moment, and this time it might be fatal. So you see why this is so urgent?"

I said, after a pause: "And when he's gone?"

She said patiently: "It's all thought out. Briefly, all you have to do is to establish yourself at Whitescar, *be* Annabel Winslow, and inherit the property (and her share of the capital) when the old man dies. Then, after a decent interval, when things seem settled, you'll turn over your legacy to Con. You'll get your cut, don't worry. Annabel's mother left her some money, which she could have claimed when she was twenty-one. You'll have that. As for the handing over of Whitescar, that can be arranged to look normal enough. You can say you want to live elsewhere In fact, you'll be able to lead your own life again, but with a nice little assured income behind you."

"The young cousin? Julie?"

"You needn't be afraid of her. Her step-father has money, there's no other child, and she'll certainly also get a share of Mr. Winslow's capital. You'll rob her of Whitescar, yes, but she's never given the slightest hint that she cares anything about it. Since she left school last year, she's taken a job in London, in the Drama Department at the B.B.C., and she's only been up here once, for the inside of a fortnight."

"But surely"—it was absurd, I thought, to feel as if one was being backed against a wall by this steady pressure of will——"But surely, if the old man realized that he was ill, and still Annabel *hadn't* come back, he *would* leave things to Con? Or if he left them to Julie, and she let Con go on as manager, wouldn't that be all right?"

Her lips folded in that soft obstinate line. "That wouldn't answer. No, my dear, this is the best way, and you're the gift straight from the gods. Con believes he'll never get control of Whitescar except this way. When you've said you'll help, I'll explain more fully"

It was disconcerting to feel the faint prickle of nervous excitement along the skin, the ever-so-slightly quickened heartbeat. Because of course the thing was crazy, and dangerous and impossible.

"No," I thought. "No. Don't touch it."

"Well?" said Lisa Dermott.

I went to the window and dragged the curtains shut across it. I turned abruptly back to her. The action was somehow symbolic; it shut us

in together, story-book conspirators in the solitary sleazy upstairs room.

"Well?" I echoed her, sharply. "All right. I'll really listen now."

Chapter Four

It took three weeks. At the end of that time Lisa Dermott vowed that there was nothing that she knew about Whitescar that I, too, didn't now know.

"You'll have to be completely honest with me, Lisa"—I used Christian names now for her and Con, and made a habit of referring to Matthew Winslow as "Grandfather"—"about Grandfather's reaction when he gets the news I'm coming. If he seems to have the slightest suspicion of a doubt you're to tell me, and——"

"We'll think again, that's understood. We'll look after you, you know. We have to. It cuts both ways."

I laughed: "Don't think I haven't realized the possibilities for mutual blackmail! But you know, Lisa, there is one point at which the story doesn't hang together at all well."

I thought she looked wary. "Where?"

"Well, unless Con intends to come through with some pretty convincing reasons for a most almighty row the night she went, I can't believe that a normal 'lovers' quarrel,' however bitter, would drive a girl away for good, even if her grandfather didn't side with her over it. I'd even have thought that Con might have been the one to be shown the door."

It was a moment or two before she replied. Then she said slowly: "I expect that Con intends to tell you exactly what passed, when he—when he gets to know you better. I believe it does hang together, quite well, really."

"All right. Well, at least," I said cheerfully, "I'll be able to tell the truth about my travels abroad. The truth, wherever possible There never was a better alibi. Let's go through our stuff again, shall we?"

And, for the fiftieth time, we did.

She was the best possible teacher for the purpose, with an orderly mind, and very little imagination. Patiently she had taught me all the

facts about Whitescar, and I soon found myself to be not only involved, but even excited by the sheer difficulties of the deception. The thing was a challenge, and, I told myself (with how much self-deceit I didn't pause to consider), I would, in the long run, do no harm. As for Julie But I didn't let myself think much about Julie. I shut my mind to the future, and kept to the task in hand, pitting my wits against Lisa's day after day, hour after hour, in those interminable cross-examinations.

"Describe the drawing-room . . . the kitchen . . . your bedroom"

"What does your grandfather eat for his breakfast?"

"What was your mother's Christian name? The colour of her hair? Where was her home?"

"Go from the kitchen-door to the hay-loft"

"Describe the front garden; what plants did you put in? The names of the horses you rode at the Forrest stables? The dogs? Your old cat? The name of the farmer at Nether Shields . . . the head cattleman at Whitescar Describe Mrs. Forrest . . . her husband"

But, as a rule, the personalities of the game were left to Connor to bring to life for me.

He managed on several occasions to come out for an hour or so while his great-uncle was resting in the afternoons. The first time he came Lisa had already been with me for a couple of hours. We were expecting him, but I was absorbed in describing the old Forrest Hall grounds as Annabel would remember them, before the house had burnt down, and I failed to hear anyone mount the stairs. It was the sudden change in Lisa's impassive, listening face that told me who was at the door, and it was she who called "Come in!" before I had even turned my head. As he entered the room I saw that his hair, and the tweed of his jacket, were misted with raindrops.

This was my first meeting with him since our strange encounter on the Roman Wall, and I had been half-dreading it; but I need not have worried. He greeted me with imperturbable friendliness, and the same unquestioning acceptance of my partnership in his affairs, that I had seen in his sister.

If my own greeting was a little uncertain, this went unnoticed in Lisa's exclamation. "Con! You're soaking! No coat on, and it's raining. Really, Con! Come to the fire, dear."

I had to stop myself from staring at her in amazement. Gone was the silent, stodgy-looking watcher of the Kasbah café, the crisply efficient tutor of the last few days. This was the hen fussing over its chick. It was a totally new facet of Lisa, and it went quite a long way towards completing the picture of Con that I had had in my own mind.

He was, in his own way, as good a teacher as Lisa. It fell to him to give me some sort of picture of life at Whitescar when Annabel had been there, and to round out, in his own racy, vivid way, the two most important portraits, that of Matthew Winslow, and of the girl herself.

I waited for him to mention the final quarrel, but when he did come to it he added very little to what I had already heard. The explanation was, in fact, left to what turned out to be my last "lesson" with Lisa. This fell on the Thursday of the third week, at a time when I had not been expecting her.

"Has something happened?" I said.

She took off her coat and sat down, then sent me a half-glance upward in which I thought I could read uneasiness, and even anger. "Julie's coming next week, that's what's happened. She's taking her holiday much earlier than we'd expected, and I've a feeling that the old man's asked her to come. You see what it means?"

I reached for a cigarette. "I see what it might mean."

"It means that if we don't get moving straight away, Julie'll have wormed her way into Whitescar, and he'll leave her every penny," said Lisa bitterly. "The old man's pleased as Punch that she can get away so soon. . . . Can't you see what Con's afraid of? He's pretty sure Julie's the residuary beneficiary now, but if Mr. Winslow alters his will before Annabel gets home, and makes Julie the principal"

"Oh yes, I see. But is it likely, Lisa? Perhaps he does just want to see Julie, and perhaps she does just want to see him. If Grandfather remakes his will at all, surely now it will be in Con's favour? You said Julie's only been to Whitescar for holidays. What possible prospect——?"

"That's just the point. Last year she was seeing a lot of one of the Fenwick boys from Nether Shields. Well, she's the old man's son's child, and Con's only a distant relative—and he likes Bill Fenwick."

"But now she's had a year in London. She'll have probably got farther than the boy-next-door stage," I said cheerfully. "You'll find you're worrying about nothing."

"I hope so. But once you're there at Whitescar, things will be safe enough. He'll never leave anything to Julie over *your* head."

I looked at her for a moment.

"No. Well, all right. When?"

There again was the surreptitious flash of excitement.

"This weekend. I'd have liked another week, but Con says straight away. You can ring up on Sunday. If you ring up at three, the old man'll be resting, and I'll take the call."

"You know, I'll have to see Con again before I come."

She hesitated. "Yes. He—he wanted to come in and see you himself, today, but he couldn't get away. You'll realize there are one or two things . . ." she paused, and seemed to be choosing her words . . . "that you still have to be told. I may as well be honest with you. We *did* deliberately avoid telling you, until you were more or less committed. We didn't want to risk your throwing the whole thing up, just because there was something that was going to make it a little awkward."

I raised an eyebrow. "Well, you needn't worry. I couldn't for the life of me go quietly away now without at least one look at Whitescar. Let's have your 'awkward' news. It's something about that last row with Con, isn't it? What had finally gone wrong?"

That little smile again, tight and secret and—I thought, startled—malignant. "Annabel," she said.

I stopped with the cigarette half-way to my lips and stared at her. "Annabel?" I said sharply. "I don't follow."

"It was a vulgarism, I'm afraid. I only meant that the girl had played the fool and got herself pregnant."

I turned abruptly and went over to the window and stood with my back to her. After a bit I managed to say: "I quite see why you didn't tell me sooner."

"I thought you would."

Her voice sounded as calm as ever, but, when after a moment or so I turned, it was to see her watching me with a wariness that was almost sharp enough for apprehension.

"Are you so very shocked?"

"Of course I'm shocked! Not at the fact, particularly—I should have expected something like that, after the build-up—but at realizing, flat

out, what I've let myself in for." After a moment or two more, I said, quite evenly: "Well? Go on. Did they find out who it was?"

She looked surprised. "Why, good heavens, Con, of course!"

"Well, but Lisa——!" I stopped, and drew a long steadying breath. "Con." I repeated it softly. "My God . . . *Con.*"

There was a very long silence. I stayed where I was, my back to the setting sun. I found that my hands were behind me, pressed hard against the edge of the window-sill. They were hurting. I drew them away, and began slowly to rub them together.

"That," I said, "was what is known as a silence too deep for words. You know, I quite see why Con was being the least bit coy about telling me himself."

She gave a little gasp. "Then it won't make any difference? You mean you'll still do it?"

"I said I would. Though this isn't going to make it any easier to face Con again, is it?"

"Con won't mind."

"That's big of him. Did Grandfather ever know?"

"Oh yes. He's the only one Con told."

"Con told him?"

"Well, yes. Not straight away, naturally. The old man was in a dreadful state, and he might easily have fired Con."

"When did Con actually confess about the baby?"

"Much later. When she finally wrote from New York, and said she was not coming home, Con had to supply an explanation. Even a violent lovers' quarrel, as you've said, wasn't enough and he thought it was better to admit the truth. Of course there was a terrible row with his great-uncle, but Con swore he'd been ready to marry her at any time and still would. So, in the end, Mr. Winslow accepted it."

"But Annabel never mentioned the baby on the way when she wrote?"

"No."

"And she hadn't told her grandfather, the night she left home?"

"No."

"In fact, it never came from Annabel at all?"

"She told Con."

"Ah, yes," I said, "she told Con."

A quick glint from under her lids. "I don't quite see——"

"Never mind. Only a line of thought. You'd better tell me exactly what happened on the night of the quarrel."

"I don't know just what passed," said Lisa. "Con says that she had just found out that day that she was pregnant from a doctor in Newcastle. She got back late, and came back to Whitescar across the fields, by the path that leads to the footbridge below the garden. She met Con by chance, somewhere along the river, where the path skirts it high up. I suppose she hadn't had time to regain her balance or self-control; the news must have been a dreadful shock to her, and when she ran into Con she just told him, flat out, and then, of course, there was a scene, with Con trying to persuade her to listen to him, and Annabel half-crazy with worry, and raving at Con, and just refusing to listen when he insisted that now they would have to marry, and that it would work out right in the end. For in spite of what must have been a wild affair, it seems she was never prepared to settle down, not with Con. And when this happened and she said that she wouldn't marry him, and now one of them would have to leave the place . . . well, Con had had a shock, too, and he's terribly hot-tempered, so I gather that the scene just went from bad to worse. Eventually she broke away from him, and ran home, shouting that she'd tell Mr. Winslow everything, and that she'd see Con was thrown out."

"But, in fact, she didn't tell Mr. Winslow 'everything.' "

"No. Her nerve must have failed her. It seems all that she did was rage about Con, and say he must be sent away; and because Mr. Winslow wanted her to marry Con anyway, all he would do was tell her not to be a fool. That's all I know." Her hands moved on her lap in a little smoothing movement. "But I think it's enough, isn't it?"

"Quite enough." I sat looking down at the table in front of me. I was thinking: "And I know, too. Something you don't. Something Con never told you. I know just what did happen that night, in the dark, above the edge of the deep river" I remembered Con's face and the smooth voice saying: *"It doesn't necessarily have to be midnight, does it, when you and I go walking at the edge of a cliff with water at the bottom? Remember?"* I remembered the look in his eyes as he spoke, and the poison-bubbles of fear pricking in my blood; I wondered how Con would equate that with the story he had told Mr. Winslow.

Chapter Five

THE approach to Whitescar was down a narrow gravelled track edged with hawthorns. To the right of the track, where it left the main road, stood a dilapidated signpost which had once said, *Private Road to Forrest Hall*. On the left was a new and solid-looking stand for milk-churns, which bore a beautifully-painted legend, WHITESCAR.

I had come an hour early, and no one was there to meet the bus. I had only two cases with me, and carrying these I set off down the lane.

Round the first bend there was a quarry, disused now, and here, behind a thicket of brambles, I left my cases to be collected later. Meanwhile I was anxious to make my first reconnaissance alone. When the hedge on my left gave way to a fence, I stood leaning on the top bar.

Below me the river, meandering down its valley, doubled round leisurely on itself in a great loop, all but enclosing the rolling well-timbered lands of Forrest Park; and the Whitescar property, lying along the river bank between the Hall and West Lodge, was like a healthy bite taken out of the circle of Forrest territory. At the narrowest part of the loop the bends of the river form a sort of isthmus through which ran the track on which I stood. This was the only road into the near-island.

I left my viewpoint and went on down the lane, walled now on the right, until it ended in a kind of cul-de-sac, bounded by three gateways. On the left, a brand-new gate guarded the Forestry Commission's fir plantations and the road to West Lodge. Ahead was a solid, five-barred gate, painted white, with the familiar WHITESCAR blazoning the top bar.

But the gateway to the right might have been the entrance to another sort of world. Where the gates of the Hall should have hung between their massive pillars, there was simply a gap giving on to a driveway, green and mossy, its twin tracks no longer worn by wheels, but matted over by the disks of plantains and hawkweed. At the edges of the drive parsley and campion began, and forget-me-not gone wild, all frothing under the ranks of rhododendrons. Overhead hung shadowy, enormous trees.

There had been a lodge once, tucked deep in the trees to the right-hand side of the gateway. A damp, dismal place it must have been to live in; the walls were almost roofless now, half drifted over with nettles, and the chimney-stacks stuck up like bones from a broken limb.

From the pillars, to either side, stretched the high wall. This was cracked and crumbling, but it was still a barrier, save in one place where a giant oak stood. It had been originally on the inside of the wall, but with the years it had grown and spread, until its vast flank had bent and finally broken the wall, which here lay in a pile of tumbled and weedy stone. But the power of the oak would be its undoing, for the wall had been clothed with ivy, and the ivy had reached for the tree and engulfed it, till now the trunk was one towering mass of dark gleaming leaves. Already, through the tracery of ivy stems, some of the oak boughs showed dead, and one great lower limb, long since broken off, had left a gap where rotten wood yawned, in holes deep enough for owls to nest in.

I looked up at it for a long time, and then at the white gate and along the neat sunny track that led up a gentle rise of pasture, and vanished over a ridge towards Whitescar.

I realized that I was braced as if for the start of a race, my mouth dry, and the muscles of my throat taut and aching. I swallowed a couple of times, breathed deeply and slowly to calm myself, repeating the now often-used formula of *what was there to go wrong, after all?* I was Annabel. I was coming home. Mary Grey need never appear again, except, perhaps, to Con and Lisa. Meanwhile, I would forget her, even in my thoughts. I was Annabel Winslow, coming home.

I pushed open the white gate. It swung quietly open on sleek, well-oiled hinges, and came to behind me with a smooth click that said *money*.

Well, that was what had brought me, wasn't it?

IN THE bright afternoon stillness the farm looked clean in its orderly whitewash, like a toy. From the top of the rise I could see it all laid out, in plan exactly like the maps that Lisa Dermott had drawn for me so carefully. The house was long and low, two-storied, with big modern windows cut into the old thick walls. Unlike the whitewashed farm buildings, it was built of sandstone, green-gold with age. The lichens

on the roof showed like patens of copper laid along the soft blue slates.

It faced south on to a strip of garden whose lower wall edged the river. From the garden, a white wicket-gate gave on a wooden foot-bridge. The river was fairly wide here, lying under the low, tree-hung cliffs of its farther bank with that still gleam that means depth.

On the nearer side of the house and garden lay the farm, a courtyard surrounded by stables and sheds. There were pigeons on the red roof of the big Dutch barn, and white hens were ruffling in the straw of the stack-yard.

I had been so absorbed in the picture laid out before me that I hadn't noticed the man approaching, some thirty yards away, until the clang of his nailed boots on the iron of the cattle-grid startled me. He was a burly, middle-aged man in rough farm clothes, and he came towards me at a speed that left me no time to think at all. I saw the red face split into a beaming smile, and heard him say, in a broad country voice:

"Why, Miss Annabel!"

There was the ruddy face, the blue eyes, the huge forearm marked with the scar where the bull had caught him. Bates, head cattleman at Whitescar. *"You'll know him straight away,"* Con had said. But I didn't venture the name. The lessons of the past three weeks still hummed in my head like a hive of bees: *"Take it slowly. Don't rush your fences."*

And here was the first fence. *"Tell the truth wherever possible"* I told it I said with genuine pleasure: "You knew me! How wonderful! It makes me feel as if I were really coming home!"

I put out both hands and he took them as if the gesture, from me, was a natural one. His grip nearly lifted me from the ground.

"Knew you?" His voice was gruff with pleasure. "That I did, the minute you come over the top there. Even if Miss Dermott hadn't tell't us you were coming, I'd a known you a mile off, lass! We're all uncommon glad to have you back, and that's a fact."

"It's marvellous to be here. How are you? You look fine, I don't think you can be a day older! Not eight years, anyway!"

"I'm grand, and Mrs. Bates, too. You'd know I married Betsy, now? They'd tell you on the telephone, maybe? Aye . . she spent all morning baking and turning the place upside down, and Miss Dermott along with her. You'll likely find there's singin' hinnies for your tea."

"Singin' hinnies?"

"Nay, don't tell me you've forgotten! You used to tease for them every day when you was a bairn."

"No, I hadn't forgotten. It was just—hearing the name again." I swallowed. "How sweet of her to remember. I'm longing to see her again. How's Grandfather, Mr. Bates?"

"Why, he's champion, for his age." A quick glance under puckered eyelids. "Reckon you'll see a change, though."

"I'm afraid I probably shall. It's been a long time."

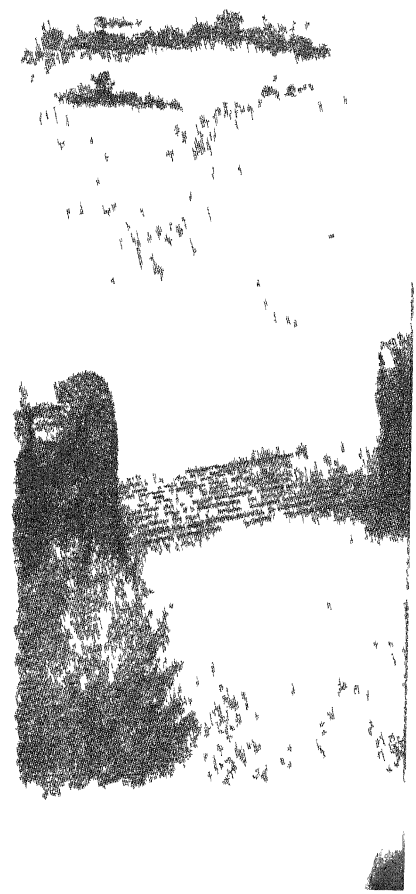
"It has that. It was a poor day's work you did, Miss Annabel, when you left us."

I smiled. "Well, it's all over now. I'm going to try and forget I've ever been away."

"I've no call to blame you, lass. I know naught about it, but that you and your granda fell out. And I know what he's like, none better."

He looked a little embarrassed and nodded past me towards the towering woods that surrounded the site of Forrest Hall. "Now, there's the biggest change you'll find, and none of it for the better. Did Miss Dermott tell you about Forrests?"

"Yes, she told me. Four years ago, wasn't it? I thought the old lodge looked very dilapidated. I never



remember anyone living there, but at least the drive looked reasonable, and the gates were on."

"They went for scrap, after the fire. Eh, well," he said, "times change, more's the pity. It's sad to see the old places falling down, and the families gone, but there it is. Well, I'll not keep you talking. They'll be looking for you down yonder. But you stay here, Miss Annabel, close by your Granda"—the words had an emphasis that was far from idle—"and don't leave us again."

He nodded abruptly, and strode past me up the track without looking back.

I turned down towards Whitescar.

THE END of the barn threw a slanting shadow half across the yard gate. Not until I was within twenty paces of it did I see that a man leaned there, unmoving, watching my approach. Con.

If Bates had been the first fence, this was the water-jump. Lisa should have told me her "awkward news" earlier, let me find some sort of working arrangement with Con before I had to greet him publicly.

He straightened up with lazy grace, and gave me a brilliant smile that held no trace of embarrassment. "Why, Annabel," he said, as he swung the gate open with a sort of ceremony of invitation. "Welcome home!"

I said feebly: "Hullo." The yard was apparently deserted, but I didn't dare risk speaking out. I said, feeling perilously foolish, "It's—it's nice to be back."

"You're earlier than we expected. You know, you really should have let me come into Newcastle for you. Where's your luggage?"

"I left it in the quarry. Could—could someone fetch it later?" I found to my fury that I was stammering like a schoolgirl.

"I'll go for it myself." Outrageously, he sounded amused. Before I could speak again he had put out both hands and taken mine in them, smiling delightfully down at me, pulling me towards him. His voice was warm and, one might have sworn, genuinely moved. "This is wonderful . . . to see you here again after all this time It's a pretty shattering moment, my dear." *"You're telling me, blast you."* I didn't dare say it aloud, but he read it in my eyes quite easily. He slackened his hold saying quickly under his breath: "There are windows looking

this way, Mary, my dear . . . are you really as mad as blazes at me?"

I spoke as softly: "Of course I am! And I don't intend to play this as though I'd come back ready to fall at your feet, Con Winslow."

He had his back to the house, and he grinned. "I can see that would be asking a bit too much. I'll play it any way you say. But it'll have to be a duet, not a duel."

"We'll just keep it calm and cousinly——"

Suddenly, it seemed, we were over the water-jump and moving easily into the straight. I relaxed, leaning back against the gate. We smiled at one another with a certain amount of understanding.

"When will Grandfather be around?" I asked.

"He won't be expecting you quite yet. Lisa says he'll see you after he's had his rest. Shall I show you round now, before you see him?"

"Good heavens, no. I wouldn't want to look round first, you know. People first, places later. You'd better take me in and introduce me to Lisa, and I'll see Mrs. Bates. I can smell baking, even from here. Do you suppose she will have made singin' hinnies for my tea?"

I had spoken quite naturally, but the naked shock in Con's face stopped me short. His lips opened and his tongue came out to wet them. "You can't—I never—how did you——?"

I lifted my brows at him. "My dear Con, if you're beginning to have doubts about me yourself, I *must* be good!"

He took a breath, then shook his head sharply, like a dog coming out of water. "Fair enough. But even Lisa wouldn't have known till today. How in the world did you know a silly little thing like that?"

"I met Bates crossing High Riggs—you'll have to learn not to look startled—on my way down from the road, and he told me Mrs. Bates would be making them for my tea. He nearly caught me right out. What the dickens are they, anyway?"

"Oh, a special kind of girdle-cake." He laughed, sounding elated and half-relieved. "You're wonderful! My God, Mary Grey—and it's the last time I'll ever call you that—you're a winner and didn't I know it the minute I clapped eyes on you, up there on the Wall?"

His hand slid under my arm. Physical contact seemed to come as naturally to Con Winslow as breathing. "Come along . . . Annabel. No, not that way. You ought to know they never use the front door on a farm."

"I'm sorry." I gave a quick glance round the deserted yard, and up at the empty windows. "No harm done."

"Not scared at all?"

"No. Edgy, but not scared."

The hand squeeezed my arm. "That's my girl."

Chapter Six

WHEN Con showed me along the flagged passage, and into the kitchen, Lisa was just lifting a fresh batch of baking out of the oven. The air was full of the delectable smell of new bread.

The kitchen was a big, pleasant room, with long windows made gay with potted geraniums and chintz curtains that stirred in the June breeze. The floor was of red tiles, covered with bright rugs of hooked rag. In front of the Aga stove was an old-fashioned fender of polished steel, and inside it, from a basket covered with flannel, came the soft cheepings of newly-hatched chickens. A black and white cat was asleep in the rocking-chair.

I stopped short, just inside the door.

At that moment, more, I think, than at any other in the whole affair, I bitterly regretted the imposture I was undertaking. What had seemed exciting and even reasonable in Newcastle, and intriguing just now in the yard, seemed, in this cheerful lovely room, to be no less than an outrage. This wasn't, any more, just a house I had come to claim for Con; it was home, a place breathing with a life of its own, fostered by generations of people who had belonged here. In Whitescar itself, the world of second-class intrigue seemed preposterously out of place.

There was no one but Con and Lisa to see my hesitation. Through a half-shut door that led to the scullery came the sounds of water running and the chink of crockery. Mrs. Bates, I supposed. Perhaps, with instinctive tact, she had retired to let me meet the current mistress of Whitescar. It was just as well she had. Solid, reliable Lisa came forward flushed and hesitating, as if at a loss for words.

Con was saying, easily, at my elbow: "Here she is, Lisa. She came early, and I met her at the gate. I've been trying to tell her how welcome

she is." This with his charming smile down at me, and a little brotherly pat on the arm. "Annabel, this is my half-sister, Lisa Dermott. She's been looking after us all, you knew that."

"We've already had a long talk over the telephone," I said. "How do you do, Miss Dermott? I'm very glad to meet you. It—it's lovely to be back."

She took my hand. She was smiling, and she spoke quite naturally, but the soft hand was trembling. "You're welcome indeed, Miss Winslow. I dare say it seems odd to you to have me greet you like this in your own home, but after all this time it's come to feel like home to me as well. So perhaps you'll let me tell you how glad everybody is to see you back. We'd—you must know—I told you yesterday—we'd all thought you must be dead. You can imagine that this is a great occasion."

"Why, Miss Dermott, how nice of you."

"I hope," she said, rather more easily, "that you'll call me Lisa."

"Of course. Thank you. And you must please drop the 'Miss Winslow,' too. We're cousins, surely, or is it half-cousins?" I smiled at her. The chink of crockery from the scullery had stopped, there was a sort of listening silence. I went on in a voice that sounded, to myself, too high, too quick, too light altogether. "After all, I'm the stranger here, after all this time, and I'm sure you've given me a better welcome than I deserve! Of course it's your home" I looked about me . . . "I never remember it looking half as pretty! New curtains . . . new paint . . . the same old chickens, I'll swear, they were always part of the furniture And the Aga! That's terrific! When was that put in?"

"Five years ago." Lisa spoke shortly, almost repressively. I could see she thought I was jumping a bit too fast, and I grinned at her with a spice of mischief.

"Isn't Mrs. Bates here?" I asked.

Lisa shot me a look, three parts relief to one of apprehension. "Yes. She's through in the scullery. Would you like——?"

But before she could finish the sentence the door was pushed open and, as if on cue, a woman appeared in the doorway, a round squat figure like a Mrs. Noah from a toy ark, who stood on the threshold with arms akimbo, surveying me with ferocious little boot-button eyes.

Lisa led in hastily. "Oh, Mrs. Bates, here's Miss Annabel."

"I can see that. I ain't blind, nor yet I ain't deaf." Mrs Bates's thin lips shut like a trap. The fierce little eyes regarded me. "And where do *you* think you've been all this time, may I ask? And what have you been a-doing of to yourself? You look terrible. If you're not careful, you'll have lost all your looks by the time you're thirty. America, indeed! Ain't your own 'ome good enough for you?"

I saw Con flick an apprehensive look at me, but he needn't have worried; Lisa's briefing had been thorough. *"She adored Annabel, cursed her up hill and down dale. Wouldn't hear anyone say a word against her. She's frightfully rude—plain spoken she calls it—and she resents me, but I had to keep her: Bates is the best cattleman in the country, and she's a marvellous worker"*

"A fine thing it's been for us, let me tell you," said Mrs. Bates sharply, "thinking all this time as you was lost and gone beyond recall, but now as you is back, there's a few things I'd like to be telling you, and that's a fact. I 'eard you and your granda having words, but I thinks to meself, it'll be all right in the morning, the way it's always been. For anyone to do what you gone and did, and run off without a word in the middle of the night——"

I laughed at her. "It wasn't the middle of the night, and you know it. It was early morning." I went up to her, took her by the shoulders and gave her a quick hug, then bent and kissed the hard round cheek. I said gently: "Make me welcome, Betsy. Goodness knows I feel bad enough about it; I don't need you to tell me. I—well, I was terribly unhappy, and when one's very young and very unhappy, one doesn't always stop to think, does one?"

I kissed the other cheek quickly, and straightened up. The little black eyes glared up at me, but her mouth was working.

Lisa rescued me. "Your grandfather'll be awake by now." She was reaching for her apron strings. "I'll take you up."

I saw Mrs. Bates bridle, and said smoothly enough: "Don't trouble, Lisa. I—I'd sooner go up by myself. I'm sure you'll understand."

Con saluted me with a tiny lift of the eyebrow. "Of course you would," he said. "Don't treat Annabel as a stranger, Lisa my dear."

"I'm sorry." Lisa's voice was once more even and colourless. "Of course you'll want to go alone Mrs. Bates, I wonder if you would help me with the tea-cakes?"

Lisa had stooped again to the oven. I had to say it, and this was as good a moment as any.

"Betsy, bless you, singin' hinnies!"

Lisa dropped the oven shelf with a clatter. I heard her say: "Sorry. Clumsy," in a muffled voice.

"You don't think," said Mrs. Bates crisply, "that them singin' hinnies is for you? Get along now to your granda."

I left the kitchen unhesitatingly.

"There's a green baize door that cuts the kitchen wing off from the main house," Lisa had said. I crossed the flagged back lobby, pushed open the baize door, and found myself in the big, square hall. The door shut behind me, and I let myself pause, exhausted. It was obvious that no questions of identity were going to rouse themselves in the minds of Mrs. Bates and her husband; but the real ordeal was still ahead of me. I must have a minute or two alone, to collect myself, before I went upstairs

I looked about me. The hall had certainly never been built for an ordinary farm-house. The floor was oak parquet, and the old blanket-chest against the wall was carved oak, too, and beautiful. A couple of Bukhara rugs looked very rich against the honey-coloured wood of the floor. The walls were plain ivory, and there was a painting of a jar of marigolds, and an old coloured map of the North Tyne, with *Forreft Hall* clearly marked, and, in smaller letters on a neat segment of the circle labelled *Forreft Park*, I identified *Whitefcar*.

Below the map, on the oak chest, stood an old copper dairy-pan, polished till its hammered surface gleamed like silk. It was full of blue and purple pansies and wild yellow heartsease. Whitescar had certainly not suffered from Lisa's stewardship.

I went slowly up the wide staircase; my feet made no sound on the thick moss-green carpet. I turned along the landing which made a gallery to one side of the hall. At the end there was a window.

Here was the door. Oak, too, with shallow panels sunk in their bevelled frames. I put out a finger and ran it silently down the bevel. The landing was full of sunlight. A bee was blundering, with a deep hum, against the window. The sound was soporific, dreamy, drowning time And time ran down to nothing; stood still; ran back

What did they call those queer moments of memory? *Déjà vu?*

Something seen before, in a dream perhaps? In another life I had stood here, facing this door, with my finger on the carving that, surely, I knew as well as the skin on my own hands . . . ? The moment snapped. I turned, with a sharp little movement, and knocked at the door.

MATTHEW WINSLOW was wide awake, and watching the door. He lay not on the bed, but on a broad, old-fashioned sofa near the windows, which were charming, long and latticed, and wide open to the sun and the sound of the river at the foot of the garden.

The big bed, covered with a white honeycomb quilt, stood against the farther wall. On a small table beside it were three photographs. One was of Con, looking dramatically handsome in an open-necked shirt; another, I guessed, was of Julie; a young, eager face with a tumble of fair, fine hair. I couldn't see the third from where I stood.

But all this was for the moment no more than a fleeting impression. What caught and held the eye was the figure of the old man reclining on the sofa with a plaid rug across his knees.

Matthew Winslow was a tall, gaunt old man with a thick mane of white hair. His eyes, puckered now and sunken under prominent brows, were grey-green; the edges of the iris had faded, but the eyes still looked bright and hard as a young man's. His mouth, too, was hard, a thin line between the deep parallels that drove from nostril to jawline. It would have been, for all its craggy good looks, a forbidding face, were it not for a gleam of humour that lurked near the corners of mouth and eyes.

In response to his gruff summons I had entered the room, and shut the door quietly behind me. There was a pause of complete stillness; the buzzing of the bees in the roses outside the casement sounded as loud as a flight of aircraft.

I said: "Grandfather?" on a note of painful hesitation.

His voice was harsh when he spoke, and the words uncompromising, but I had seen him wet his lips and make the attempt twice. "Well, Annabel?"

There was surely, I thought confusedly, some sort of precedent for this, the prodigal's return? *He ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.*

Well, Matthew Winslow couldn't run. That left me.

I went quickly across the room and knelt down beside the sofa, and

put my hands on his lap. His thin hand, with its prominent, blue-knotted veins, came down hard over mine, surprisingly strong and warm.

In the end it was easy to know what to say. I said quite simply: "I'm sorry, Grandfather. Will you have me back?"

The hand moved, holding mine together even more tightly. "If I said no," said Grandfather crisply, "it would be no more than you deserve." He cleared his throat violently. "We thought you were dead."

"I'm sorry."

His other hand reached forward and lifted my chin. He studied my face, turning it towards the light of the window. I bit my lip and waited, not meeting his gaze. He said nothing for a long time, then, as harshly as before: "You've been unhappy. Haven't you?"

I nodded. He let me go, and at last I was able to put my forehead down on the rug, so that he couldn't see my face. He said: "So have we," and fell silent again, patting my hand.

Out of the corner of my eye I could see Con's portrait, the eyes watching me. What good would it do now to lift my head and say: "Your beloved Con's betraying you. He's paying me to come and pretend I'm your grand-daughter, because he thinks you'll die soon, and he wants your money, and your place." And something in me added: "And once he's made certain that you've left it to me, I wouldn't give twopence for your life, Grandfather, I wouldn't really"

The old man said nothing. I stayed where I was, not speaking. The bees had gone. A small bird flew into the roses by the open window; I heard the flirt of its wings, and the tap and swish of the twigs as it alighted.

At length I lifted my head, and smiled at him. He removed his hands, and looked at me under the thrust of his brows.

"Get a chair." He spoke abruptly. "And sit where I can see you."

I obeyed him. I chose an upright chair, and sat correctly and rather primly on it, knees and feet together, back straight, hands in lap, like a small girl about to recite her catechism.

I thought I saw a glimmer of appreciation in his eyes. "Well?" he said. Without moving, he seemed all at once to sit up straighter, even to tower over me. "You've got a lot of talking to do, girl. Supposing you start."

Chapter Seven

"WELL?" said Lisa softly, like an echo. "How did it go off?"

I had paused when I saw her waiting below, and now came reluctantly down the stairs.

"All right. Far better than I'd have expected."

"Hm. He didn't—he wasn't suspicious at all?"

"No." I spoke a little wearily. "It never even entered his head."

She pursed her lips with satisfaction. "Well, what did happen?"

I said slowly: "You can have the main outlines, if you like. I told him where I'd been since I left here, and how I'd been living."

"Did he say much about . . . the reason why you went?"

"If you mean the baby, he never mentioned it until I did. I simply told him I'd been mistaken about having one, and that I'd found out my mistake after I'd gone abroad. And of course I never wrote to tell him so, since I'd no idea that Con had told him about it. That was all. He was so relieved, and . . . oh, well, skip that."

"And Con?" Her voice had lifted perceptibly.

"I tried to make it clear that nothing in the world would persuade me to take up with Con again." I saw the look in her face, and added smoothly: "That, of course, was to protect Con and myself. Grandfather may have been nursing some hopes of reconciliation. I had to insist that there could never be anything between Con and myself except"—I hesitated—"you might call it armed neutrality."

"I see, yes." She looked about her with a conspirator's look. "He'll be coming down soon. Later tonight, when we're alone, you can tell me all that was said."

"Make my report? No," I said gently.

Her mouth opened, with as much surprise as if I had struck her. "What d'you mean? You surely don't think that you can——"

"Let's put it like this. I've a difficult role to play, and the only way to play it is to *be* it, to live in it, breathe it—try to dream it. I can't act this thing in a series of little scenes, Lisa, with commentaries to you and Con in the intervals. If there's anything vital, or if I should want your help, I won't hesitate to come to you. But the biggest help you can

both give me is simply to forget all that's happened in the last three weeks, and think of me, if you can, just as Annabel."

After a moment her eyes dropped. "You're quite right. I'll try and do as you say, and forget it all, unless there's anything urgent. But it certainly doesn't look as if you're going to need much help, my dear. You . . . you're so very *good* at this. If you got away with that——" A movement of her head towards the upper landing completed the sentence for her.

"Well, I did. Now let's forget it. I think I'll go upstairs for a little. Am I in my old room?"

She smiled. "Yes. D'you mind using the nursery bathroom? You'll be sharing it with Julie."

"Of course not. Does she know about me?"

"Yes. She rang up last night to say she'd be here on Wednesday, and Mr. Winslow told her about you. That's all I know."

"Wednesday" I paused with a foot on the lowest stair. "Ah well, that gives us two more days." I turned and went back upstairs. I could see her watching me as, unhesitatingly, I took the left-hand passage past the head of the gallery.

"Yours is the second door" It was a pleasant room with a long latticed window like Grandfather's. The furniture was plain deal, white-painted, and the chintz was pretty—a Persian-looking pattern of birds and flowers.

Con had dumped my baggage near the foot of the bed. He had also thoughtfully brought up my handbag, which I must have left in the kitchen. I picked it up, opened it to take out my cigarettes, and saw immediately that the top had come loose on my lipstick; then that my few papers were shuffled about. Whoever had scrabbled hastily through my handbag, had taken few pains to cover his tracks.

Con? Lisa? I grinned to myself. What was it they called this thing? Counter-espionage? I turned over the papers. A few shopping chits; a time-table; a folded paper of pale green

I unfolded it. "*Passenger Motor Vehicle Permit* . . . Mary Grey" And the address near Montreal. There it lay, clear as a curse; the owner's licence that you carry daily, and never even see.

It had been an easy mistake to make. I wondered, not without amusement, how on earth Con and Lisa would manage to warn me about it,

without having to confess that they had searched my belongings

I got up, put the car permit in the fire-place, and carefully set a match to it. Then I went to the window-seat and sat for a few minutes, trying to relax.

The window looked out over the small front garden, a simple square bounded by low sandstone walls. From the front door a weedy path sloped to the white wicket-gate that gave on the river-bank and the footbridge. The path was bordered by ragged hedges of lavender, under which sprawled a few hardy pansies and marigolds. Behind these borders, to either side, the unkempt grass reached back to a confusion of lupins run wild and strangled peonies that had once been the flower-beds.

("Annabel's garden. She planted it all.")

It was time to go down for tea. Act Two. Back into the conspirator's cell with Con and Lisa.

I found myself hoping passionately that Con wouldn't be in.

HE WASN'T, and it was still, it seemed, going to be easy. Grandfather came down a little late, opened the drawing-room door on me discussing amiably with Lisa what had happened to various neighbours during my long absence, and thereafter acted more or less as though the eight years gap had never been.

After tea he took me outside, and led the way towards the farm buildings. He walked fairly rapidly, and held his gaunt body upright apparently without effort. With the westering sun behind him, shadowing the thinned, bony face, it wasn't difficult to see once more the active, opinionated, quick-tempered man who had done so much through his long life to make Whitescar the prosperous concern it now was. I could see, too, why Con—in spite of the old man's favour—walked warily.

Grandfather paused at the yard gate. "Changed much?"

"The farm? I—it's hard to tell."

A quick look under the jutting white brows. "What d'you mean?"

I said slowly: "Oh, some things, yes—that wall's new, isn't it? But I mean—well, I suppose I've lived so long on a memory of Whitescar, that the real thing's bound to look strange to me."

"Mm." He was staring at me fixedly. He said abruptly: "Con's a good lad."

I must have sounded slightly startled. "Yes, of course."

He misunderstood the wariness of my manner, for his voice had a harsher note as he said: "Don't worry. I'm not harking back to that business eight years back. I'd hardly hold Connor in affection for that, would I? Only thing I have against him, but at least he came out into the open, and tried to make amends like a decent man."

I said nothing. I saw him glance sideways at me, then he added testily, as if I had been arguing: "All right, all right. We'll drop it now. But apart from things that are over and forgotten, Con's a good lad, and he's been a son to me this last eight years."

"Yes."

Another of those bright, almost inimical glances. "I mean that. After you'd played the fool and left me, he stayed. He's more than made up for what's past. He's put everything he knows into the place."

I smiled at him. "What do you expect me to say, Grandfather? It's quite true. I played the fool, and left you; Con played the fool, and stayed. One up to Con. Not forgetting, though, that it took me rather longer to get over my folly than it took him . . . or you."

There was a little silence. Then he gave a short bark of laughter. "You don't change," he said. "So you've come back to quarrel with me, have you?"

"Grandfather darling," I said, "no. But you're trying to tell me how wonderful Con is. Eight years ago, all this would have been leading up to a spot of match-making. I hoped I'd made it clear that that was impossible."

"Hm. So you said, but one never knows how much one can believe a woman, especially when she starts talking claptrap about love and hate."

"I don't hate Con. If I felt strongly about him at all, I couldn't have come back whilst he was still here. I told you how I felt; indifferent, and more than a bit embarrassed. I'd give a lot not to have had to meet him again" I smiled a little. "All right, Grandfather, let it pass. I had to see you, and it'd take more than Con to keep me away. But you're leading up to something. What is it?"

He chuckled. "All right. You always knew Whitescar would be yours when I died, but had it occurred to you that I might have made other arrangements during the time you were away?"

"Well, of course."

"And now that you've come back?"

I turned to face him, leaning against the gate, just as I had leaned to talk to Con earlier that day. "Come to the point, Grandfather dear."

The old eyes peered down at me, bright, amused, almost malicious. "I will. It's this. They'll have told you I'm not expected to live a great while—no," as I made some movement of protest, "don't bother. We all know what my confounded condition means. I'll be straight with you. Do *you* think it right that you should just walk back here after eight years, and scoop it all up from under Con's very nose?" His head thrust forward suddenly. "What in thunder are you laughing at?"

"Nothing at all. Are you trying to tell me that you've left everything to Con?"

"I didn't say that. But is there any reason that you can think of why I shouldn't?"

"None at all."

He looked almost disconcerted, then said testily: "I've been thinking a good deal about these things lately. You knew Julie was coming here on Wednesday?"

"Yes. Lisa told me."

"I wrote and asked her to come as soon as she could. I want to get things fixed up. Isaacs—do you remember Isaacs?"

"I—I'm not sure."

"The lawyer. Nice chap. He's coming on Friday, and then again next week. I suggested the twenty-second."

"The twenty-second? That's your birthday, isn't it?"

"Good God, fancy your remembering." He looked pleased.

"Lisa's planning a party, she told me, since we'll all be here."

"Yes. A family gathering. Appropriate." He gave that dry mischievous chuckle again.

I tilted my head and looked up at him, all amusement gone.

"Grandfather——" I paused. "At this—appropriate—family gathering . . . do you intend to tell us all where we stand?"

He snorted. "I intend to keep my affairs to myself. Don't glare at me like that, child; it cuts no ice! I take it you expect me to cut you right out, leave Julie to her own devices, and hand the place lock, stock and barrel, to young Connor? That it?"

I said: "Grandfather, you always were insufferable, and you were never fair in all your born days. How the devil do you expect me to know what you plan to do? You'll do as the mood takes you, fair or no, and Con and I can take what comes."

Grandfather's face never changed, but something came behind the eyes that might have been a grin. He said mildly, "Don't swear at me, Annabel, my girl, or old as you are, I'll soap your mouth out."

"Sorry." We smiled at one another. There was a pause.

"It's good to have you back, child. You don't know how good."

"I don't have to tell you how good it is to be here."

He put a hand to the latch of the gate. "Come down to the river meadows. There's a yearling there you'll like to see."

He went down a lane to a gate that opened on a field deep with buttercups and cuckoo-flowers. A grey mare moved towards us, swishing her tail, her sides sleek and heavy. From the shade of a big beech a yearling watched us with eyes as soft and wary as a deer.

"He's a beauty."

"Isn't he?" There was love in the old man's voice. "Best foal Blondie ever dropped. Forrest kept a three-year-old out of her by the same sire, but they'll make nothing of him. She's a grand mare: I bought her from Forrest three years ago, when his stud was sold up."

I followed him into the field. "What's wrong with the three-year-old?"

"Nothing, except that nobody had time to do anything about him. Only kept him out of sentiment, I suppose. I'm afraid you'll find nothing here to ride now. Blondie's heavy at foot, as you can see, and the youngster's sold." He laughed. "Unless you try your hand with Forrest's three-year-old. I've no doubt he'll let you if you asked him."

The mare had swerved from his caressing hand, and was pushing close to me, reaching out an inquiring muzzle. From behind me, some way off, I heard footsteps approaching. I backed away from the mare's advance until I was right up against the gate.

I said breathlessly: "Asked who?"

"Forrest, of course. What the devil's the matter with you, Annabel?"

"Nothing. What should be the matter?" The footsteps were nearer.

Grandfather was regarding me curiously. "You're as white as a sheet! Anyone'd think you were afraid of the mare!"

I managed a little laugh. "Afraid of her? How absurd! Here, Blondie" I put out a hand to her head. I hoped he wouldn't see how unsteady it was. Lisa and I had concocted a story about an injured back to explain my not riding, but it was no good to me now. I looked away from Grandfather's curious, puzzled stare, and said quickly: "I thought Mr. Forrest was in Italy."

"He's coming back some time this week, so Johnny Rudd tells me. I imagine he sold the place in Italy quicker than he'd expected."

I said unsteadily: "I—I understood he'd left for good. I mean, with the Hall gone, and—and everything——"

"No, no. He's planning to settle at West Lodge now" Con's voice, from beyond the bend in the lane, called: "Uncle Matthew? Annabel?"

"Here!" called Grandfather.

The mare was nibbling at my frock, and I was pressed so hard against the gate, that the bars bit into my back. Grandfather gave a quick little frown. "Annabel——"

"I thought as much!" Con said it, mercifully, from just behind me. "I might have known you'd bring her straight down here!"

He had summed up the situation at a glance; I saw the flash of amusement in his eyes, and then he handed off the mare with one strong thrust over the gate. As I relaxed, Con pushed open the gate and came through. Grandfather, fortunately, was watching the yearling as it cantered in the shade of the trees. "Moves well, doesn't he?" he said fondly.

"He's a little beauty," agreed Con.

"Little?" I said shakily. "He looks enormous!"

A flicker of anxiety in Con's eyes showed me the ineptitude of this remark. Then he covered up smoothly. "Yes, he's pretty well-grown, isn't he, seeing he's barely a year old" And he plunged easily into technicalities about a tractor that needed repair, talking across to his great-uncle as we walked slowly back towards the yard.

But I had realized that Con's timely appearance had not been a matter of chance. He had guessed what might be happening in the paddock and had come down to get me out of it.

We reached the gate, and Grandfather went ahead. Con turned and



his eyes met mine. He said very softly: "Can *you* still drive a tractor —Annabel. Or a car?"

After a moment I smiled. He had earned it. I said: "I had a car in Canada. I've just burnt the permit."

"Ah," said Con.

Chapter Eight

SUPPER went off smoothly enough, though Grandfather was in something of a "do you remember" vein. Con wasn't there. He was at work long hours in the hayfield while the weather lasted. After supper Grandfather went into the office to write letters and I helped Lisa wash up. Soon afterwards I went up to my room.

I sat by the open window, with the scent of the climbing roses unbearably sweet in the dusk, and my mind went round and round over the events of the day like some small creature padding in its cage. Then in the still evening, came the sharp sounds of a door opening and shutting at the side of the house. Con had been in for a late meal, and was going out again to the fields.

I got up quickly, and went downstairs and out into the fading light. I caught up with Con at the end of the lane that led down to the river meadow. He turned at the sound of my hurrying steps, and waited. The smile with which he greeted me faded when he saw my expression.

"What is it?" His voice was guarded. "Trouble?"

"No," I said breathlessly. "Not the kind you mean. But I—I had to see you straight away, tonight."

His face had stiffened almost into hostility, arming itself. So much I thought for Con's co-operation; it was fine as long as you stayed in line with him

"Well?" he said.

I had meant to start reasonably, at the right end of the argument I had prepared, but the abrupt, even threatening sound of the monosyllable shook my resolution into flinders. Womanlike, I began at the end. "This can't go on. You must see that. We were mad even to have thought of starting it!" Once begun, it seemed I couldn't check myself. "We—we'll have to think of something to tell Grandfather. You must

see there's no point in my staying, now, you must see! Even if I could have got away with it——"

I heard him breathe in sharply. "*Could have* got away with it? Do you mean he's found you out?"

"No, no, *no!*" I heard my voice rising, and checked it on a sort of gulp. "Con . . . look, I'm sorry——"

He said, as unpleasantly as I had ever heard him speak: "Getting scruples is that it? A little late, my pretty."

His tone, even more than what his words implied, was all the cure my nerves needed. I stared at him. "Are you trying to threaten me, Connor Winslow?"

"Not the least in the world, my love. But we're in this together, you know. I can't have you forgetting our . . . bargain . . . quite so soon. You're doing splendidly, so far; things have gone even better than I dared to hope . . . and they're going to go on that way, darling, till I—and you, of course—get what we want. Fair enough?"

"Oh quite." I regarded Con curiously, straining my eyes against the dark. "I wonder . . . I wonder just how far you would go, to get what you wanted?"

"I've sometimes wondered that myself." He sounded amused. "You'd perhaps be surprised what you can bring yourself to do when you've never had a damned thing but what you could make—or take—with your own two hands. I'm not going to be sent on my travels . . . fair means if I can, but by God, I'll use foul ones if I have to!" He paused, and his voice when he continued was not ungentle. "Supposing you tell me exactly what's upset you? Was it the horses this afternoon?"

"No, it wasn't that. I—I've had a ghastly day, that's all. Con, I'm not planning to let you down. The point is, things have changed since I had my talk with Grandfather after tea."

"Changed? How?" I heard his breath go out.

"Con, all this may have been for nothing. I—I think he's going to leave Whitescar to you anyway."

"*What?*"

"I'll swear that's what he meant. Did you know that his lawyer is coming down here on Friday—after Julie gets here?"

"No, I didn't know." He sounded dazed.

"Well he is. I've a feeling Grandfather wants to have some sort of

family gathering on his birthday, and he's asked the lawyer here before that, so it's a fairly reasonable guess that it's to be about his will."

He moved sharply, and the gate creaked. "Yes, but this *is* only a guess! What about Whitescar? What did he actually say?"

"Well, he reminded me first of all that Whitescar had always been promised to Annabel. Then he began to praise you. He really does recognize your place here, Con. Then he asked flat out if I thought I ought to be allowed to walk straight home and scoop Whitescar from under your nose, after all the work you'd put into it."

"Did he, by God?" A long breath, then he laughed, a sharp exultant crack of sound. "And what did you say?"

"Well, I thought it would be less trouble if I just said no."

"Do you know something?" said Con slowly. "You're a very much nicer person than Annabel ever was."

"Good heavens, why on earth?"

"Because I honestly believe you want me to have it. And not just for the 'cut' you'll stand to get, either."

"Don't you believe it. I'm as mercenary as hell," I said cheerfully.

He ignored that. "Ironic, isn't it," he said thoughtfully, "how our little conspiracy has turned out? I import you into Whitescar at great trouble and some risk . . . and all for nothing. He'd have left it to me all along—if you're right. We still don't know where Julie comes in." Unexpectedly he laughed. "All right, darling. We'll wait and see and pray you're right. And irony or no, I still say you're my lucky star."

"I don't know about that." I half-turned towards him. In spite of myself, my voice tightened. "Con . . . you still haven't heard what I came to say. Please don't be angry. I'm not needed here any more. I—I want to go."

"Go? You're crazy!" Again the enmity was open and sharp between us. "How could you walk out now? What d'you think people—let alone Mr. Winslow—would say? What possible excuse could there be, short of the truth?"

"It's simple enough. I've only to go to Grandfather and tell him that I came back to see him, but that now I can see how silly it was of me to come . . . because of seeing you again, I mean. He'll accept that; he might even think I'm sulking because of his decision to leave Whitescar to you."

"I tell you, *no!* For one thing, we still don't know for certain about the terms of this will, or even if there *is* to be a new will. Even if you're right, do you think I want him cutting you right out, as he certainly would if you left tomorrow?"

I stared painfully through the dark. "What do you mean?"

"My dear little conscience-stricken nitwit, do you think I want to see him splitting his capital two ways instead of three? If you stay, I get your share as well as my own. It's as simple as that." I was gripping the top bar of the gate, and his hand came down over mine in a kind of pounce. "So, darling, you'll stay. You'll go on playing the sweet repentant prodigal. And you'll play it till you collect at least Annabel's rightful share of what money's going. Is that clear?"

"No."

Silence. I could feel his anger running through his hand into mine.

Then suddenly the moon was there, swimming up behind the tree-tops. I could see his face clearly, bent to mine. The expression of his eyes was hidden; the moonlight threw back a glint from their curved, brilliant surfaces, hiding everything but an impression of blackness behind. I was again sharply aware of that terrifying single-track concentration of his. The bright, blank eyes watched me.

He said, quite gently: "You mean this? You really want to give it up, and go? Very well, my dear. Have it your own way."

I said, incredulously: "You mean, you'll help me? You'll let me go —give it up, and you'll just wait and see . . . fair means?"

"If that's the way you want it." He paused, and added, very kindly: "We'll go straight in now, and tell your grandfather that you're not Annabel at all. We'll tell him that you're Mary Grey of Montreal, an enterprising tramp on the make. We'll tell him that the three of us, Lisa, myself and you—all of whom he trusts—have plotted this thing up against him, and that we've been laughing at him all day . . . Do you see?"

Eventually I said: "Yes, I see."

"I thought you would."

"It would kill him, wouldn't it?"

"Oh yes, I think you can be sure it would kill him. Any strong emotional shock would. And we don't want him dead—yet—do we?"

"Con!"

He laughed. "Don't worry, sweetheart, that's not the plan at all. I only said it to wake you up to the, er, realities of the situation."

"To frighten me, you mean?" Then I said, before I thought: "Don't think I haven't grasped the fact that you once tried to murder Annabel."

A long, breathless pause. He straightened up from the gate. "Well, well. You *have* put two and two together and made five, haven't you? Well, go on believing that; it'll keep you in line That's settled then. We carry on as planned, and you, my lovely, will do as you're told. Won't you?"

Chapter Nine

JULIE arrived just before tea on a drowsy afternoon. Everywhere was the smell of hay, and the sound of the distant tractor was as much a part of the hot afternoon as the hum of the bees in the roses. It made the sound of the approaching car unnoticeable, till Lisa looked up from the table where she and I had been buttering scones and said: "There's a car just stopped at the gate. It must be Julie." She bit at her lower lip. "I'll go out and meet her."

I followed her down the flagged passage to the back door, and waited there in the shadow while she went out into the sunlight.

Julie was at the wheel of an open car, a battered relic almost as old as she was. She dragged ineffectually at the hand-brake, then hurled herself out of the door without even switching off the engine.

"Lisa! What heaven! We've had the most *sweltering* run! How's Grandfather? Has she come? My dear, you don't mind Donald, I hope. It's his car. I asked him to stay—I hope you don't mind? I'll do every *stroke* of the work myself. *Has* she come?"

She had on a white blouse, and a blue skirt belted tightly to a slim waist with a big chestnut-coloured leather belt. Her fair hair shone in the sun almost as pale as cotton-floss, and her eyes were grey-green and very clear, like water. Her face and her bare arms and legs were tanned golden, and a heavy gold bracelet emphasized one slim wrist.

She turned, with a swirl of her blue skirt, towards a man whom I now noticed for the first time. He had been shutting the yard gate, and before responding to Julie's hail of "Donald! Come and meet Lisa!",

he walked quietly across to where the car stood, switched the engine off, put the key carefully into his pocket, and then approached, with a slightly diffident air.

I found later that Donald Seton was twenty-seven, but he looked older, having that rather solemn, withdrawn look that scholarship sometimes imposes on the natural reserve of the Scot. He looked clever, gentle, and about as mercurial as the Rock of Gibraltar. He made a most remarkable foil for Julie.

She was saying, with an air of delighted improvisation: "Lisa, this is Donald. Donald Seton. He's come to work up at the Roman fort at West Woodburn—he's the most terrific big bug in Roman Remains or whatever you call it. Darling, this is Lisa Dermott; she's a kind of cousin, and the most *dreamy* cook! Lisa, he can stay, can't he?"

"Of course we can put you up, easily," Lisa said, warmly for her.

"I really wouldn't dream of putting you to the trouble." Mr. Seton spoke with a quiet lack of emphasis that was as definite as a full stop. "I've explained to Julie that I'll have to camp on the site."

"Ah well," said Lisa, "if that's what you've arranged. But of course you'll stay and have tea?"

"That's *absurd!*" cried Julie. "Donald, darling, you can't *possibly* camp at West Woodburn, it's the *last* place, and I've seen that site of yours; there are *cows*. Obviously you'll stay here. Lisa, I can't bear it another moment. Where *is* she?"

I came out into the sunlight.

"Annabel!" For a moment Julie stayed posed between welcome and something else. The moment hung suspended, like the wave before it breaks. I thought I can't bear it if she hates me and, God knows, she may have the right.

"Annabel *darling!*" said Julie, and dived straight into my arms and kissed me. The broken wave washed over me; the salt drops smarted in my eyes. She was laughing and hugging me and talking, and the moment slid past with all the other moments, and was gone.

"Annabel, you *devil*, how *could* you, it's been such hell, and we were so unhappy. . . . Oh, Lord, I'm not crying—these must be those tears of joy they always shed like *mad* in books Oh, it's terrific! I'm so thankful you're not dead." She gave me a little shake. "Only *say* something, darling, for pity's sake, or I *will* think you're a ghost!"

I looked at Julie, feeling suddenly helpless. I cleared my throat, smiled uncertainly, and said the only thing that came into my head. "You—you've grown."

"I suppose I have," said Julie blankly.

Then we both laughed, the laughter perhaps a little high and overpitched. I could see Lisa's dismay at my feeble ineptitude. As far as it was possible for me to do so at that moment, I felt amused. Of course there was nothing to say.

The next second, uncannily, Julie was echoing my thought. "Isn't it silly? You long like mad to see someone, and then, when the moment comes there's nothing whatever to say. You do understand, don't you?"

"Of course. I'm just thanking heaven you do." I smiled at her, and then at Donald, who was gravely waiting on the outskirts of the conversation. "I'm still English enough to regard tea as a sort of remedy for any crisis. Shall we go in and have it? How do you do, Mr. Seton?"

"Oh, Lord, I'm sorry," said Julie, and hastily made the introduction. "Only for pity's sake call him Donald, everybody does, at least, everybody he *likes*, and if he doesn't like them, he never speaks to them at all, which comes to the same thing."

I laughed as I shook hands with him. "It sounds a marvellous way of getting along."

"It works," said Donald.

Julie was laughing too as Lisa shepherded Donald ahead of us towards the house. But then she gave me a swift look and thrust her arm into mine. "Darling, you break my heart. You're so thin, and when you're not smiling you look unhappy. It's not like you . . . I mean, you weren't like that before."

"I don't see why you should worry over the way I feel."

"Don't you?"

"No. Why should you care what happened to me? I lighted out regardless, didn't I? Why should you care?"

The grey-green eyes were open and candid as a child's. "Because I love you, of course," said Julie, quite simply.

In a way, Julie's homecoming was as exacting as my own.

Mrs. Bates was, inevitably, lying in wait in the kitchen: "And very nice it is to see you, Julie, and very smart you're looking, quite London,

I'm sure And that was your young man that went through with Miss Dermott? 'Not official?' And what does that mean, may I ask? Now don't you bother, Miss Annabel, love. Go on in. I'll bring the trolley as soon as the tea's massed."

We were waiting for Mrs. Bates and the tea-trolley, when Con walked in. He had come down unexpectedly from the hayfield, and was still in his working clothes—old breeches, and a white shirt, short-sleeved and open at the neck. He looked magnificent.

He greeted Donald with none of the curiosity that I knew he was feeling. If he had been wondering about Julie's new escort as a potential threat to his own position, the worry, I could see, was dispelled as soon as he saw the unobtrusive figure sitting quietly conversing with me. I could also see, quite well, that he was pleased—as Donald rose to greet him—to find himself the taller of the two by at least three inches. The contrast between the two men was remarkable, and I saw an odd expression in Julie's eye as she watched them. The only person in the room who seemed unconscious of Con's overwhelming physical splendour was Donald.

Grandfather came in then, followed immediately by Mrs. Bates with the tea. The old man was using a stick, which I hadn't seen him do before, and I thought he looked more finely drawn than usual.

"Grandfather, it's lovely to see you!" Julie, as she rose to greet him, gave him a fond, anxious look. "How are you?"

"Hm. You've controlled your anxiety remarkably well, haven't you? How long is it since you were here? Twelve months?"

I saw a glance pass like a spark between Con and Lisa.

"Only ten," said Julie. "Grandfather, this is Donald Seton. He drove me up, and he's going to be working at West Woodburn."

"How d'ye do? Good of you to bring the child. Working at West Woodburn, eh? What sort of work?"

As Donald answered, I noticed that Con, ostensibly talking to Julie, was listening carefully.

Presently Mrs. Bates, laden with more scones, and big with news, re-entered the room briskly. "The way things gets around in these parts is like magic, it is that. Here's Julie only been at home five minutes before her young man's on the phone. He's waiting." She slapped the plate of scones down, and stared pointedly at Julie.

The latter looked blank for a moment, then I saw the faintest tinge of pink slide up under her skin. "My—young man?"

"Aye," said Mrs. Bates a little sourly. "Young Bill Fenwick from Nether Shields."

"Young Fenwick?" said Grandfather. "What's this? What's this?"

"I've no idea." Julie spoke airily, setting down her cup. "Did he say it was for me?"

"He did, and well you know it. Never talked about anyone else since last time you were here, and if you ask me——"

"Oh, Mrs. Bates, *please!*" Julie, scarlet now, almost ran out of the drawing-room. Mrs. Bates gave a ferocious nod that was aimed somewhere between Grandfather and Donald. "He's a nice lad, Bill Fenwick is, but he's not for the likes of her, and *that's* the truth and no lie!" And with that she disappeared.

We were all talking when Julie returned, so blandly unconcerned, and so fussily careful of the hot-water-jug she was carrying, that everyone's attention switched straight to her with an almost audible click. It was all Con could do, I knew, not to ask her outright what Bill Fenwick had said. "Julie?" Old Mr. Winslow had no such inhibitions. "What did the boy want?"

"Oh, nothing much," said Julie airily, "just how was I and how long was I here for, and—and all that."

"Hm. Well, now, let's have a look at you, child. Come and sit by me. Now, about this job of yours"

Conversation began to flow again.

Chapter Ten

DONALD drove off to West Woodburn soon after tea, and in the evening Julie and I went out together. We went through the garden towards the wicket-gate and the river-path that led towards West Lodge. In the half-light the rank borders looked and smelt heavy with flowers.

Now that we were alone together there still seemed curiously little to say. Never by word or look had she betrayed any consciousness that my advent might make the least difference to her future. It might not even have occurred to her . . . but it soon would; it must.

We had been filling up the eight years gap—I with completely truthful reminiscences of my life in Canada, and Julie with a lively and libellous account of the year she had spent in the Drama Department at Broadcasting House. ". . . No, *honestly*, Annabel, it's gospel truth!"

"I don't believe you even know what 'gospel' means."

" 'Good tidings.' "

"Heavens!"

"I thought that'd shake you," said Julie complacently.

"I suppose you got that from Donald?"

"I expect so. He's a hundred per cent solid worth." Her voice had abruptly lost its sparkle.

We climbed the two steps of the stile that marked the boundary between the Whitescar property and the first of the West Lodge fields, and sat side by side on the broad cross-bar, facing away from the house.

I looked at her. Then I said tentatively: "I'm afraid I fell for your Donald, from a great height."

Her face came alight for a moment. "One does. That's how it happened, with me. He's such a—a poppet. He's—oh, he's so *safe* . . .!" She finished on a note that sounded more despondent than anything else: "And I do adore him, I do, really."

"Then what's wrong?"

"I don't know." She extended a sandalled foot, and regarded it. "I do want to marry him. At most times I want nothing better than to marry him *soon*. And then, sometimes, suddenly" A little pause. "He hasn't asked me, actually."

I smiled. "Well, you've got three weeks."

"Yes." She dimpled, then sighed. "Oh, Annabel, it's all such *hell*, isn't it? If only one could *tell!* In a way it was one of the things I was so longing to see you again for. I thought you'd know, you see."

"My dear," I said helplessly. "Why should you imagine that? I—I made a pretty fair mess of my own life you know."

She said immediately: "That's why. It isn't the people who've had things their own way who—well, who get wisdom. People ought to avoid pain if they can, like disease . . . but if they have to stand it, it's best use might be that it makes them kinder. Being kind's the main thing, isn't it?"

"Julie, I wouldn't know. On a rainy day I find I believe quite different things from on a fine one. But being cruel is the worst thing, so kindness might be the best. When you come to think about it, it covers nearly everything, doesn't it?"

She twisted a small spray of hawthorn-blossom between her fingers, so that the flower-heads swung out and whirled like a tiny roundabout. She seemed all at once very young and uncertain as she hesitated, apparently, on the brink of some confidence.

I spoke almost nervously. "Julie."

"Mm?" She seemed absorbed in the twirling flowers.

"Julie—don't ask me about it, but . . . well, just keep quiet for the moment about the state of affairs between you and Donald, will you?"

The flowers stopped twirling. She turned her head, her eyes wide and surprised. "Heavens, why?"

"I can't explain. But while you're making up your mind to have Donald when he asks you—and if you can't make him in the next three weeks, I wash my hands of you—well, quarrel with him all you like in private, but don't let other people see you having too many doubts."

"Honey!" To my relief she sounded amused. "Is this Aunt Agatha's advice to young girls, or do you really mean anyone special when you say 'other people?' "

I hesitated. I believe that at that moment I very nearly told Julie the whole story. But I said, merely: "You might say I meant Grandfather. I think this stroke he's had has frightened him, rather, and he's fretting a bit about the future—our future."

She sent me a glance that was all at once adult and wise. "My future, do you mean, now that you've come home?"

"Yes. You know what men of his generation are like, they think there's really nothing but marriage. I know he'd like to think of your being settled with someone like Donald. I'm sure he liked him, too. So —don't rock the boat too much, Julie."

"The boat? Mr. Isaacs and all?" She laughed suddenly. "Grandfather told me he was coming and I *thought* there was something in the wind! Don't you start worrying about that, Annabel. Good heavens, all I want is to get on with my own life in my own way, and I think—I *think*—that includes Donald!" She dropped a hand over mine where it lay on the bar. "But don't you ever go away again. Promise?"

I said nothing, but she took this for assent, for her hand squeezed mine softly, and then withdrew. She added, cheerfully, "Look, there's Mr. Forrest's horse, over there, like a shadow. He looks awfully quiet. Don't you love the way everyone shakes their heads over him and says 'He won't be easy to school'?"

"But I expect it's true. Blondie's foals do have that reputation."

"Do they?"

I glanced at her, amused. Obviously, this was not Julie's *métier*. She had shown the same cheerful ignorance in the drawing-room over tea, when the talk had turned on the affairs of Whitescar. Grandfather had noticed; I had seen him eyeing her; and Con had noticed, too. And now she had made it obvious that she realized my return would deprive her of her place here; she had also made it apparent that she didn't care. I felt a real rush of relief, not only for my conscience' sake, but because Con could now bear no grudge against her.

She was watching the horse with uncritical admiration. The growing moonlight touched him here and there as he grazed, a dapple of light shifting over moving muscle; then a sudden liquid flash from the eye as he raised his head to stare. I heard him blow a soft greeting through whickering nostrils. He seemed to eye us uncertainly for a moment, as if he might come forward, then he lowered his head again to the grass. "I thought he was coming," said Julie breathlessly. "They all used to, to you, didn't they? Will you help school him? Johnny Rudd says he'll be the very devil."

"He sounds a useful sort of beast," I said drily. "What colour is he in daylight?"

"Red chestnut, with a pale mane and tail. His name's Rowan. Aren't you going in to speak to him?"

"I am not. This isn't my night for charming wild stallions."

"It seems a dreadful pity that all the horses had to go. It must have been a dreadful wrench for Mr. Forrest—a sort of last straw."

"Yes."

There was a little pause. Then she said, with a curious soft abruptness, her eyes still on the horse: "You don't have to pretend with me. I've known all along. He's back you know—Mrs. Bates told me. Have you . . . have you spoken to him yet?"

The dusky trees, the shapes of hawthorn, the ghost of the grazing

horse, all seemed to blur together for a moment. "Have I—what do you mean? Spoken to whom?"

"Mr. Forrest, of course."

Before I could grope for words, she looked at me again, fleetingly, sideways, and said, like a nice child who confesses to something that she may be punished for: "I'm sorry. But I did want to tell you that I knew all the time. I knew that you and Adam Forrest were lovers."

I said: "Oh dear sweet *heaven*."

"I'm sorry." She repeated the words with a kind of desperation. "Perhaps I shouldn't have told you I knew. But I wanted you to know. In case it was difficult or—or anything. You see, I'm on your side."

"Julie——"

"I didn't spy on you, don't think that. But I saw you together sometimes, and people don't always notice a kid of eleven hanging about. I knew you used to leave letters in the ivy tree at the Hall gate. I thought it wonderfully romantic. But I can see now that it must have been pretty awful for you. You were younger than I am now."

My hands were pressing down hard to either side of me on the bar of the stile. "Julie . . . you . . . we . . . I didn't"

"Oh, I know there wouldn't ever be anything *wrong*. That's what I meant when I said I knew you'd had a bad time; I mean, if one falls in love with a married man, it's a—a hopeless passion, isn't it? One can only go away. I knew why you'd gone, and I thought it marvellous of you. Do you know, I used to cry about it?"

I said, in a very hard, dry voice: "You needn't have done that."

She gave a little laugh: "Oh, it wasn't all tragedy to me at that age. It was sad, yes, but beautiful too, like a fairy-tale. I used to try and make up happy endings to myself. Was it so very dreadful for you?"

"Yes."

"You don't mind my having told you I knew? I rather wanted you to know. We won't speak of it again if you like."

"It doesn't matter. It's over."

She looked almost shocked. "Over?"

"My God, Julie, what d'you take me for? One can't tear a great hole in one's life pattern and expect the picture to be unspoiled when one chooses to come back. Of course, it's over!"

"But . . ." her voice sounded all at once as frankly disappointed as a

child's . . . "but it's not the same now, is it? I mean, now that you *have* come, and he" The sentence trailed off.

"You mean because Crystal Forrest's dead?" I said flatly.

I heard her give a little gasp. "Well . . . yes."

I laughed. "Poor Julie. Your happy ending at last. I'm sorry. Oblige me by forgetting it, darling. And remind me one day to thank you for forgetting it as far as Coin and the rest are concerned. I'd have rather hated them to know."

"You know," she said, "you talk about it all as if it was just a story about someone else."

"That's what it feels like," I said. "Look, why don't you go in? You've had a long journey today, and you must be tired. There'll be plenty of time to talk."

"O.K." She yawned suddenly and unashamedly, like a child. "Oh lord, I *am* sleepy. Aren't you coming in?"

"Not yet. It's a lovely night, and I'm not tired. Good night."

"Good night," said Julie.

Chapter Eleven

If you stood on the low piece of crumbling wall that enclosed the trunk, you could just reach your hand into the hole. I held on to the stems of the ivy with one hand and felt above my head into the hollow left by some long-decayed and fallen bough.

I put my hand in slowly, nervously almost, as I might have invaded a private drawer in someone's desk. The secret tryst; the lovers' tree; what right had a ghost there, prying?

In any case there was nothing to pry into. Whatever secrets the ivy tree had held in the past, it was now only a tree, and the post-box was an empty hole, the bottom cracked and split. I climbed down from the wall and wiped my hands on my handkerchief.

Beside me, skirting the ruins of the lodge, the neglected avenue curled away into the shadows. I turned my head to look where, beyond the blackness cast by the trees, the gate to Whitescar glimmered in the moonlight. I made a half-movement in that direction, then checked myself. *If it be not now, 'tis not to come.* Well, let it be now.

I put away my handkerchief, and walked quickly past the ruined lodge, up the silent mosses of the drive, towards the house.

THE MOON was full, and the skeleton of the house stood up sharply. I went slowly down the moss-furred steps of the terrace, past the sheep that grazed among the azaleas, and over the grass to where a sundial stood in a riot of low-growing bushes. I pushed aside the trailing honeysuckle with gentle hands, till the shaft of the sundial lay bare. The moonlight struck it slantingly, showing the faint shadows of carving under the soft rosettes of lichen. I scratched a little of the moss away, and traced the letters with a slow, exploratory finger.

TIME IS. TIME WAS

Another line below. No need to trace that out.

TIME IS PAST

Nor did it need the startled swerve of a ewe ten yards away to tell me that I had been right. He had come, as I had guessed he would. I turned slowly round. He was standing not twenty yards away—just a shadow under the trees—but it could be no one else.

Well, get it over with. *If it be not now, yet it will come.* Somehow, I would find the right things to say.

It seemed a very long time before he moved. The moonlight fell strongly on him as he came forward, and even at that distance I could see that he was staring as if he had seen a ghost. His eyes looked very dark and the brows made a bar of black across them. I could see the strong planes of his cheeks and the thin line of a mouth schooled to reserve or patience.

He spoke at last, in an expressionless half-whisper. "Annabel?"

"Adam?" The name sounded tentative, as if I'd never used it before.

He had stopped a yard or so away. There was a pause, painfully long. Then he said: "I came as soon as I knew."

"Did you expect to find me here?"

"I didn't know. I thought . . . I don't know what I thought. Does it matter? You came."

"Yes," I said, "I—I had to see you."

I found that I had braced myself for his response to this, but he made none. His voice was so flattened and expressionless that it sounded barely interested. "Why did you come home?"

"Grandfather's ill. He—he may not have long to live. I had to see him again."

"I see." Another pause. That flat, empty voice again. "You never told me you were coming."

He might have been talking to a stranger.

I answered him in the same way. "I didn't know you'd be here. I'd heard you lived in Italy now. In fact, when I came back, I'd no idea that your——" I stopped, swallowed, and finished stupidly on a complete *non sequitur:* "I didn't even know that Forrest Hall had gone."

"You never did have much regard for logic, did you? What you started to say was, that you didn't know that Crystal had died."

"Yes. I—I hadn't heard. I'm sorry."

He said slowly: "Are you trying to tell me that if you had known that I'd be here—and free—you would not have come back?"

Was this, after all, easier than I had imagined, or was it worse? His voice and face gave nothing away. There was nothing to indicate that he cared, any more than I did. Why should he? Eight years was a long time. I said, almost with relief: "Yes. Just that."

"I see." For the first time the steady gaze dropped, momentarily, then came back to me with a jerk. "But you came tonight to meet me?"

"I told you. I had to see you. After I found out that you were back, I knew I—well, I couldn't just wait around and meet you in public."

"That was nice of you." The flat voice held no irony.

Easy? This was intolerable. Heaven knew I had dreaded the interview. I had expected questions, recriminations, anger even . . . anything but this calm, dead voice and steady, unreadable stare.

I stood away from the sundial.

"I must go." I spoke hurriedly, nervously. "It's late. I——"

"Why did you go?"

The question came so suddenly that, although it was softly spoken, I looked up at him, startled. He was still watching me. "You know," he said, "you can't simply walk out like this. I would have thought we had a very great deal to say. Why did you go like that?"

"You know why I went!" I could hear how my voice shook, edged with nerves, but I couldn't control it. "Can't we . . . just *leave* it, Adam? I didn't come to see you tonight because I hoped . . . because

I wanted" I floundered desperately for words "I knew you'd feel just the same as I do now. I only came tonight so that we could—we could——"

"Agree that it was forgotten? I know, my dear." His voice was very gentle. There was no reason why I should have to bite my lips to keep the tears back. "You don't have to worry," he said. "I shan't torment you. There's someone else, isn't there?"

"No!" I hadn't meant to say it quite like that. I saw his brows lift a fraction. "No. It's not that. It's only——"

"That people change. Yes. You've changed a good deal, Annabel."

I lifted my head. "Have I?"

His mouth twisted. "So it would seem. Tell me: do you—or perhaps I should say *did* you—intend to stay at Whitescar, now that you're back?"

At least here was a safe and easy path. I scuttled down it breathlessly, talking too fast. "I hadn't really made any firm plans. I told you I only came to see Grandfather. Actually, I'd decided to come back before I knew he'd had a stroke. I wasn't sure if he—if they'd want me back at Whitescar, but I wanted to see him if he'd let me." I hesitated. "They've all been very kind. I'm glad I came back. I'd like to stay till . . . as long as Grandfather's here. But I don't think I'll stay afterwards."

A pause. "And the place? Whitescar?"

"There'll be Con."

"You'd leave Whitescar to Connor Winslow?"

I smiled. "I may have to."

"Don't beg the question. You know what I mean. If the place were yours, would you stay?"

"No."

"Has that decision anything to do with me?"

I swallowed. "You know it has."

There was a pause. He spoke almost as if he were reasoning quietly with me about something that didn't greatly matter. "You know, I've regretted everything I said and did that last night, far more bitterly than you could have done. I doubt if I'll ever quite forgive myself. Not only for losing my head then, but for ever allowing things to . . . get to the stage they did. You were very young, after all; it was I who

should have known better. The sort of life I led with Crystal was no excuse—I could do nothing but hurt you."

"Don't please, there's no need——"

"Don't think I'm trying to excuse myself. I'd just about come to the end that last time we met—or so I thought; except that, of course, one never does." He took in his breath. "So I finally lost my head, and begged you—bullied you—to go away with me and to hell with everybody, including my poor, unhappy wife. And you refused."

"What else could I do?"

"So then," he said, "I told you that, if you weren't prepared to do as I asked, I never wanted to see you again. Oh no," at my involuntary movement, "I suppose I didn't put it quite so crudely, but I remember a good many wild words, to the effect that either you would have to leave the neighbourhood, or I would, and since I was tied to Forrest and to my wife" He drew in his breath. "But heaven help me, Annabel, I never dreamed you'd go."

"It was better. And I've told you—this is best forgotten."

I turned quickly away from him, but he moved forward again. His hand caught at my arm, and, almost before I realized what was happening, he had pulled me round to face him.

"Wait, listen. I can't let you go like this. You've got to listen to me. I've got to see you again."

I said breathlessly, trying to pull away from him: "No!"

"My God," he said, "what did I do that made you hate me so?"

"I don't, I don't!"

"Then stay one minute, and listen. Look, Annabel, don't cry. It's all right. Just let me tell you You've told me it's all over for you; you don't love me. Very well, I'll accept that. But you can't imagine that I'll just retire quietly and do nothing about it, can you?"

Somewhere, far off, an owl hooted. I said waveringly: "Do nothing about what?"

"About trying to see you again." His other hand came up now, and he had me by both arms, holding me lightly. "You see," he said, "there's still one thing that we haven't made plain. It isn't over for me."

I felt myself stiffen, and he went on quickly: "No, all right, I've told you I'll accept the fact that you want to forget the past. But there's still the future, my dear. You can't expect me to stand by and do



nothing, now that you've come home." He shook me gently. "This time I'll woo you properly, by daylight, according to the book. I'll even start by calling on your grandfather——"

"No!" He must have felt the genuine shock of panic that jerked me rigid against the light clasp of his hands. I had come to meet him tonight knowing that the eight-years-past love-affair must be kept from Con. I had thought that all I had to do was tell Adam Forrest the simple truth—that I did not care for him; that the past was dead and buried. It had not once occurred to me that passion might still be smouldering, ready to flare—into danger.

"Please," I said shakily, "you mustn't come to Whitescar." Then the panic mushroomed inside me and burst into words I had never meant to say: "Can't you see it's over! *Over*. Will you please, please, *please* leave me alone!"

He had dropped his hands, and was staring at me now, the smile gone, and a deep crease gathering between his

brows. Finally he spoke, "If it weren't absurd," he said, very slowly, "if it weren't something so crazy as to sound like black magic . . . I'd have said you couldn't be Annabel. Even in eight years, I wouldn't have thought you'd change so much."

I drew a sharp little breath, and choked; then I said quickly, and perhaps too loudly: "That's silly! Who else could I be?"

"That," he said, even more slowly, "is what I'm wondering." He took several rapid strides away from me, and I wondered, in a panic again, where he was going. But then he turned, churning his heel in the grass, and came back. His face looked impassive. "Is this true?"

I hesitated painfully. The moment stretched like a year. Then I saw that the hesitation had answered for me.

"You're not Annabel Winslow?"

I cleared my throat and managed to say, steadily enough, even with a kind of relief: "No, I'm not Annabel Winslow."

HE HAD come close to me again, and was scrutinizing my face in the fading moonlight. "You look like her, you move like her. But your voice is different . . . and there's something else Don't ask me what. But it's . . . extraordinary." He gave a little laugh that had no relationship with mirth. "Who are you?"

"Does that matter?"

"Probably not. But it matters a great deal why you are here, and why you're doing this—whatever it is you are doing. You might as well tell me the lot; after all, I have every right to know."

"Have you?"

He turned his head as if in exasperation. "Of course. You must know a good deal about my affairs, or you wouldn't have been here to meet me tonight. Who told you? Annabel?"

"Annabel?" I said blankly.

"Who else could it have been?" He turned to the sundial, and appeared to be tracing out the figures with a forefinger. His voice was abrupt. "Tell me, please. What you know of her."

"It wasn't that!" I cried. "I never met Annabel! It was Julie who told me!"

"Julie?"

"Yes. Oh, don't worry, she didn't know anything, really, about you

and Annabel; but she'd seen you meet and talk in the wood, and she knew about the post-box in the ivy tree. She—she just thought it was a perfectly natural and very romantic way of conducting a love-affair. She never told anyone."

"I see. And just what has she told you?"

"Only this—about the meetings and the ivy tree. She wanted me to know she knew. She—she rather imagined I'd be wanting to see you again, straight away. Honestly, there was nothing else."

"Yet you played your part so very well." His voice now had an edge to it that would have engraved the bronze dial he was fingering. "I find it hard to believe that you knew so little. Perhaps Connor Winslow found out somehow——"

"No!" I said it so sharply that he glanced at me, surprised. "At least, he's said nothing to me. He hardly mentions you." I added, lightly: "I'm a very good actress, of course; I merely played to the cues I got. If you think back over what was actually said, you'll find that all the *statements* were made by you."

"What's your name?" The words snapped.

"Mary Grey."

"You're very like her, but of course you know that." A long look. "Am I seriously to believe that you have somehow got yourself into Whitescar, and are masquerading as Annabel Winslow?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

I laughed. "Why do you think?"

There was a silence. He said, not pleasantly: "Funny, you don't look venal."

"Try earning your living the hard way," I said. His lips thinned, and I added: "Oh yes, I forgot. You work for your living now. Well, didn't you mind having to spoil your hands?"

"I beg your pardon?" He sounded startled. I couldn't imagine why.

"Wouldn't you perhaps have taken a chance to step into some easy money, if the chance came, and it did no harm?"

"I did once. But they'll have told you about that, too. And how can we expect to calculate what harm we do? Who's briefing you?"

"Con himself, and his sister."

He stared at me unbelievingly. "Do you really expect me to believe

that? Don't take me for a fool; Connor'd as soon slit his own throat."

"It's simple enough. Grandfather has refused to believe Annabel's dead or to alter his will. I think it seems pretty obvious that, in the end, he would have admitted that she must be dead, and willed the place to Con—I'm sure he's decided that Julie doesn't want it. In fact, I think he *intends* to will it to Con. But he's ill now, really ill; and he may play with the idea, just to torment people, until it's too late."

"And just what do you get out of this?"

"A home, at the moment. A competence."

"A competence!" he said explosively. "Why, you lying little thief, it's a small fortune!"

"Be realistic, won't you, Mr. Forrest? Do you really see Con Winslow watching me pocket all the money that goes to Annabel?"

"Of course. Stupid of me." He spoke as if he were discussing the weather. "You hand the major part to him, and are allowed to keep your 'competence.' How neat, always assuming that there's sufficient honour among thieves. . . . Where did you meet Connor Winslow?"

I said evasively: "Oh, he saw me one Sunday when I came out to this part of the country from Newcastle. He thought that I was his cousin come back, and he followed me. We talked."

"And hatched this up between you?" The contempt in his voice was hardly veiled. "Well, so far, I gather, you've been completely successful . . . as why shouldn't you be? Given the nerve, the information . . . and the luck."

"Well," I said, calmly enough, "it seems the luck's failed, doesn't it?"

"Indeed it does." His voice was gentle, calculating. He was watching me almost with hatred, but I could forgive him that, remembering how he had betrayed himself to me. He said slowly: "Yes, you've been clever. But you must have realized you couldn't hope to deceive me. You must have gone through quite a bad moment when you heard that your erstwhile lover was coming home."

"Quite a bad moment," I said steadily.

"I'm glad to hear it. But you kept your head, clever Miss Grey. You had to risk seeing me here; you didn't dare wait to meet me for the first time in public. But now, what happens? Do you really imagine that I won't blow the whole thing sky-high on you?"

I said coolly: "I have no idea what you'll do. It's quite possible that

tomorrow you'll turn up at Whitescar, and tell Grandfather what you've learned tonight. You'll tell him that she's dead after all, and that all these years Con has been nursing his resentment, and planning to take Whitescar . . . and looking forward to Grandfather's death."

There was a silence. Adam Forrest said unemotionally: "You bitch."

"I thought you'd see it my way." (Con, smiling at me in the lane, his voice soft in the whisper that conspirators, and lovers, use. Yes, Con had taught me how to play it.) "It's really better for everyone the way it is, isn't it?" I finished, gently.

"Whether a thing is right or wrong doesn't depend on how many people it hurts. This is wrong."

I said suddenly, violently: "How the hell dare you sit in judgment on me, Adam Forrest?"

He jumped. I saw his eyes narrow on me suddenly, then he relaxed with a queer little sigh. "Then what about Julie? I can't see that it's 'better' for her."

"Julie has money of her own."

"That," said Adam Forrest gently, "is hardly the point."

"It's the point unless you do propose to—what's the phrase we crooks use?—blow the gaff."

"You and Connor are keeping Mr. Winslow in a false paradise. That's quite clear. If I did agree to hold my tongue now, it would be purely for his sake. But there's Julie. If he dies——"

I said: "How much of a fool can you be? If he dies before he remakes his will, and you throw Annabel back into her grave, what do you suppose would happen to Julie? I think I know Con Winslow a little better than you do."

This time the silence was electric. The night was so still that I heard my own heart-beats, and I thought he must hear them, too. Ten miles off, a train whistled for a crossing.

As if it had been a signal to wake us both, he said: "Don't be absurd." But his voice had slackened with uncertainty. Then, all at once sounding very tired, he said: "I don't understand you."

"Why should you? But I'm not *bad,* and I'm telling you the truth about this. It's wrong, I admit that, but no one's going to suffer, and to do the right thing now will be to do nothing but harm. So let well enough alone; will you, Mr. Forrest?"

He let out a breath like a sigh. "All right. I'll keep out of it, for a while at least. But watch your step . . . Annabel."

"Then you will . . . play my game?" I said breathlessly.

"Let's say I'll think about it, and hold a watching brief. But I promise you that if I plan to 'blow the gaff,' I'll warn you first."

I hesitated. "Good night . . . Adam."

He didn't answer. I turned away and left him.

Just before the dark leaves of the rhododendrons hid him from me, I thought I heard him say "good night."

Chapter Twelve

THE DAYS went by, warm and cloudless. Haymaking was in full swing, and the mown fields smelt Elysian, lying in ribbed gold under a blue sky. Wild roses tumbled anyhow through all the hedges, and Tommy, the fat black and white cat, startled everyone by confounding the experts and having seven kittens.

And Adam Forrest did nothing.

Whatever his intentions, I had decided to behave as normally as possible. I made no further attempt at confidence with Julie, and she offered none, though I could not help suspecting that all was not well between her and Donald Seton. I believed that Julie's affections were seriously engaged, but I could see that Donald's steady reserve might appear daunting and even formidable to a nineteen-year-old extrovert accustomed to easy and outspoken admiration from young men. Julie, for all her gay sophistication, was young and romantic enough still to want her love-affair sprinkled with stardust, and vulnerable enough to be hurt by a reserve which she must mistake for reluctance I found myself hoping fervently that Donald would emerge soon from his Roman preoccupation, and speak.

Meanwhile, he called at Whitescar after work and, on one occasion, Julie went up to West Woodburn. He had brought her back in the evening, and stayed to dinner, listening in apparent amusement to her lively—and malicious—account of the way he occupied his time.

"Sitting in a hole," said Julie, "my *dears,* I mean it, sitting all day scraping away at mud. Nothing but mud, *honestly!*"

"No gold coins? No statues?" I asked, smiling.

"I think there was a Roman bootlace."

Donald's eyes twinkled. "That was our big day. You mustn't expect excitement all the time."

She opened her lips, then shut them again. I said quickly: "Just what are you doing anyway?"

"Only a preliminary bit of dating."

"Dating?" Grandfather looked up from his cheese.

I saw Donald glance at him, in that diffident way he had, and confirm that this was genuine interest and not mere civility, before he replied. "We've dug a trial trench in the wall of the fort, and we're going down layer by layer, examining the successive ramparts and whatever pottery shards and so on come to light as we work down. Eventually it sorts itself out into a picture of the general history of the place. It's like most jobs, I suppose, masses of dull routine; but the good moments, when they come, can be pretty exciting."

"*You* seem to find it terribly absorbing anyway," said Julie, then suddenly laughed with an attempt at her normal good humour. "At *least*"—this to me—"he's coming up out of the mud on Wednesday. Did I tell you? We're going into Newcastle, to the Royal."

"The theatre? How lovely. But darling, Wednesday . . . it's Grandfather's birthday party, had you forgotten?"

"Oh yes, I know; that's why we're going to the matinée. It's John Gielgud's new play, and I simply *cannot* miss it. So Donald's sneaking Wednesday off. We'll be back in good time for the dinner. Donald's staying for that, too."

"Look," Donald said, in his pleasant unemphatic voice, "I hadn't realized it was a family party. I think perhaps I'd better say——"

"Now, don't go crying off," said Grandfather. "We'll be thankful to have you. Never known a family gathering yet where the presence of a stranger didn't do a lot of good. Anything I have to say to the family as such, can be said in three minutes, on the way to bed." The fierce, faded old eyes went round the table, lingering momentarily on Con's empty chair. "And better so. There's been too much talk already, and I can't stomach post-mortems before I'm dead. Well," he continued a little drily, as he pushed back his chair, "enjoy yourselves at the theatre."

"We will, be sure of that! But till then," said Julie, dimpling at

Donald, "I'll let you get on with your mudlarking in peace, and put in a bit of work for Con instead. In any case, I think haymaking's more fun, and far more profitable to the human race."

"Very probably," said Donald equably.

ON Wednesday, Mr. Isaacs came, for the second time, just before midday, and Grandfather took him straight into the office. I gave them ten minutes, then went to the dining-room to get the sherry.

As I crossed the hall, Julie came downstairs, pulling on her gloves.

I paused. "Why, hello! My, don't you look wonderful!"

This was true. She was wearing crisp cotton, the colour of lemon-ice, and her gloves were white. The pale, shining hair was brushed into an elaborate and very attractive style. Over one arm she carried a little coat of the same material as the frock. I said: "Ve-ery nice! But why so early? I thought Donald couldn't get away till after lunch?"

She tugged the second glove into place, pushing the heavy gold bracelet higher up her wrist with a sharp little movement that looked almost savage. "Donald," she said crisply, "can't get away at all."

"Oh, Julie, no! Why?"

Her careful composure shivered a bit, like cat-ice wrinkling under the wind. Her eyes were stormy. "Because he doesn't think what I want to do matters a damn, that's why!"

I said, "Now come off it, honey. What's happened?"

"Somebody's turned up from London, and Donald rang up to say he'll have to stay and see him. The one time he *did* say he'd leave his precious blasted Romans——"

"Julie, he'd come if he could. He can't help it."

"Oh, I know, I know! I'm not as silly as all that. But he knew how *foully* disappointed I'd be. He needn't have sounded just as if he didn't even *mind* not going out with me. It would be different if he'd ever"—she sounded all at once very young—"if I was sure he cared."

"He does care. I'm sure he does."

"Then why the hell doesn't he say so?" cried Julie explosively.

"Is he still coming to dinner tonight?"

"He said he'd try. I said he could please himself."

"Oh, Julie!"

"Oh, I didn't just say it like *that.* I was really quite nice about it."

She gave me a wavering smile. "Almost reasonable But if he *knew* what hellish thoughts were churning away inside me"

"It's often a good thing men don't."

"Well, you've got something there," said Julie. "Oh, Annabel, you've done me good. I must go now; there's the car." She gave me a little sideways look under her lashes. "I told you I wasn't going to miss this play. I'm going with Bill Fenwick."

"Donald couldn't get away, so you rang up Bill Fenwick, and asked him to take you? That it?"

"Yes," she said, with a shade of defiance.

"And *he* dropped everything—the haying at Nether Shields—and promptly came?"

"Yes." She eyed me. "What's wrong with that?"

"Nothing at all," I said cheerfully. "Now honey, go and enjoy your play. We'll be seeing you at dinner."

The front door shut behind her and I went into the dining-room. I found the sherry-glasses, and a tray, but as I set the decanter on this, the office door opened, and Grandfather came out.

He was making for the baize door that led to the kitchen lobby, but, hearing the chink of glass, he stopped, turned, and saw me through the open door. He came into the room, and shut the door behind him.

"I was just going to bring you some sherry," I said. "Were you looking for me?"

"I was going to get Betsy Bates and that girl Cora to witness my signature," he said, in a dry, rather harsh voice.

"Oh." I waited. He stood just inside the door, his head bent and thrust forward, staring at me under his brows.

"Child——" He seemed not quite to know what he had come to say.

"Yes?"

"I've taken you at your word."

I tried not to let him see the relief that swept through me. "I'm glad of that. It's best for everyone—Con, me, the place, your peace of mind."

"Julie?"

"And Julie," I said steadily. "Julie loves this place, don't think she doesn't, but can you see her running it?"

He gave his little bark of laughter. "Frankly, no. Must confess I've wondered, though, with young Fenwick in the offing——"

I said quickly: "There's nothing in that. It's Donald Seton, you know he lives in London when he's not on field work."

"Hm. Decent sort of fellow, I thought. Only thing is, he doesn't look as if he's got a penny to his name."

I laughed. "His clothes and car? That's affectation, when he's out on a dig. I'll bet he's formal enough in London. He makes eighteen hundred a year, and his family's got money."

"How the devil d'you know?"

"Julie told me."

"Good God," said Grandfather, impressed. "Girl's got sense, after all." He gave a curious little sigh. "You and Connor should have made a match of it. Should still. I'm not raking up the past, but after what's been between you——"

"I told you, it would never have worked."

"Come here."

I went and stood in front of him. He put up a hand, and held it against my cheek. It was cool and very dry, and felt as light as a leaf. "It's made me very happy, your coming back. Don't think for a moment that you're not my favourite, because you are."

"I always did say you were never fair in your life."

"I've left you some money," he said gruffly. "A good sum, and Julie, too. I want you to know."

"Grandfather, I——"

"It's settled. I've done what I think fair, in spite of what you say about me. Whitescar goes to Connor, with the house, stock, implements, the lot. I take it you won't contest that? Or Julie?"

"No."

"Then we come to your recompense for losing Whitescar. Should have been yours. Handed over your head to Connor."

"Oh." I waited, helplessly.

"The money," said Grandfather. "I've divided it into three. A third goes to Julie, outright. The other two-thirds I've left in trust, to pay your income for life."

"In—trust?"

"That's what I said. Worked it all out with Isaacs as the best way. I want you repaid for losing Whitescar, and I want to see you well-provided-for. But I don't want the money to leave the land outright.

After your death it comes back to Connor absolutely, or to his heirs. On the other hand, if Connor should die before you, without issue, then Whitescar becomes yours, and the money along with it absolutely. I take it, if he were gone, you'd look after the place . . .? Good girl." His hand lifted. "No, wait, I haven't finished. There's one thing more. If you should marry Connor——"

"Grandfather——"

"If you should marry Connor, and live at Whitescar, the money becomes yours then, absolutely. Clear?"

"Y-yes." The only really clear thing was the old man's determination to tie the money to Whitescar; and me, along with it, if he could, to Con. Dazedly I tried to assess the probable results of what he had just told me. "But . . . *two-thirds* for me, and a third for Julie? What about Con? If I don't—I mean——" I floundered, and stopped. It was no use insisting; let him keep his dream.

"I've left him a little, and Lisa, too."

"But, Grandfather——"

"My good girl"—he was suddenly irritable—"anyone would think you were trying to get rid of every penny piece to Con! Are you mad? If the place comes to him over the heads of you and Julie, he can hardly expect much more! It'll not be easy for him, but he'll make out."

He stopped, breathing hard. I noticed how heavily he was leaning on his hand. He pulled a handkerchief, rather fumblingly, from his breast-pocket, and touched it to his mouth. "Con's not afraid of work, and the land's in good heart. I think it's fair enough, all round."

"Darling, of course it is! And now let's stop thinking about it." I grinned at him. "You know I can't stomach these post-mortems."

He patted my cheek. "Dear child," he said, and went abruptly out of the room.

I HAD thought that Con would surely show up at midday, though he rarely ate with us now. The tension in him had increased perceptibly since Mr. Isaac's first visit on Friday; he seemed edgy and strained, and spent his time in the fields, driving himself and the men to clear the hay before the weather broke. He watched the great soapsud clouds build up their slow thunder-towers . . . and with the same cold preoccupation he watched Grandfather . . . who seemed daily testier and

less predictable. What it cost Con in self-command I shall never know, but he did not come in to luncheon.

The lawyer left immediately afterwards, and Grandfather retired to rest. I had promised Lisa to go into Bellingham that afternoon to do some shopping. She was already busy with preparations for dinner, but had refused to allow me to help her "because," she said simply, "I enjoy special occasions."

The shopping did not take long, and I caught the four o'clock bus back which put me down at the head of the lane. I assembled my rather awkward collection of packages and set off downhill. When I reached the mouth of the disused quarry, I saw a car. Donald's car.

I picked my way in at the rutted entrance of the quarry. Donald was there, pipe in mouth, hands deep in trouser-pockets, his head tilted back, apparently surveying the high wall at the back of the quarry. He turned when he heard my footsteps, took the pipe out of his mouth, and smiled.

"Why, hello."

"Hello." I added, a little awkwardly, with a gesture of the basket and parcels in my hands: "I saw your car, and yielded to temptation. You were coming down to Whitescar, weren't you?"

"If I hadn't been," said Donald diplomatically, "I should be now."

I laughed. "You could hardly do anything else. I've an awful nerve, haven't I?" I hoped that my glance at his suit, which was, for once, impeccably formal, had not been too obvious. I added quickly: "We were all hoping you'd manage to get away. Julie'll be delighted. She went into Newcastle after all; but she'll be back in time for dinner."

"Did she? Then she won't miss the play. I'm glad. Did her cousin take her?"

"Con? No, Bill Fenwick. D'you know him?"

"She's mentioned him. Would you like to put your parcels in the car?" He moved to open the door and take them from me.

"Thanks very much." I handed them over with a sigh of relief. "There. At least that's one way of ensuring that you do come to dinner. I only hope I'm not taking you down too early."

"No; I wasn't going straight there. I want to see Mr. Forrest, so I'll go over via Whitescar, and"—he grinned—"it'll be very nice to have someone to open the gates."

"Fair enough. But what interests you here? This is a geologist's sort of thing not an archaeologist's, surely?"

"Oh, yes. But there is something interesting. This is the local sandstone that they've used for all the old houses hereabouts. I'd like to find out when it started."

"I can tell you one thing. This is supposed to be the quarry that Whitescar came out of. So the first workings here must be at least four hundred years old."

"Older than that, by far." I saw, suddenly, a spark of excitement in his deep hazel eyes. "Come and tell me if you see what I see. The oldest end of the quarry's along here, and it's flooded. But be careful. Here, take my hand."

We picked our way through the foxgloves, where loose stones and shrouds of rusting iron made going dangerous. Suddenly I said: "Do you like living in London?"

"Very much." He looked surprised. "I've good rooms and my work takes me out as much as anyone could want."

"Do you think you'd want to settle there permanently?"

He stopped. "You mean if I married Julie?"

I hadn't been ready for quite such direct dealing. "Yes. Yes, I did mean that. Perhaps I shouldn't have——"

"If I married Julie, I should still have to go where my work was," said Donald bluntly, "and it won't always be at West Woodburn. Are you trying to tell me that she'll want to come and live here? I didn't altogether get the impression that she was wedded to the place."

"She's not." I hesitated, then added, equally bluntly: "Nor likely to be."

He looked at me sharply. I took a breath and plunged on. "Have you said anything to Julie yet?"

He said quite simply: "No. It's been—so quick, you see . . . I don't mean that I'm any the less sure, but I don't know if she . . . well, she's so young."

"Nowadays girls know their own minds at nineteen."

"Do they?" I caught a slight hesitation in his manner then. He said: "I rather thought Julie had given every indication of not knowing."

"Bill Fenwick? I assure you, you needn't worry about him."

"I wasn't thinking about Bill Fenwick. I mean Connor."

"Con?" I spoke flatly: "If you'd asked me, I'd have said she didn't even like him."

He was filling his pipe again, more, I thought, for something to fidget with than because he wanted to smoke. "I should have thought he was the very sort of chap a girl would be bound to fall for."

"Oh, he's attractive," I said impatiently. "You might say devastating. But you forget, Julie was brought up here; she thinks of him like a brother . . . and not a particularly favourite one. Donald, don't ask me why, and blame me for an interfering so-and-so if you like, but I wish to goodness that you'd simply ask the girl!"

He sent me a sudden, transforming grin. "It'll be a pleasure. Now, come along, and be careful down this slope, there may be loose bits. Round here now. You can walk on the edge, the rock's safe."

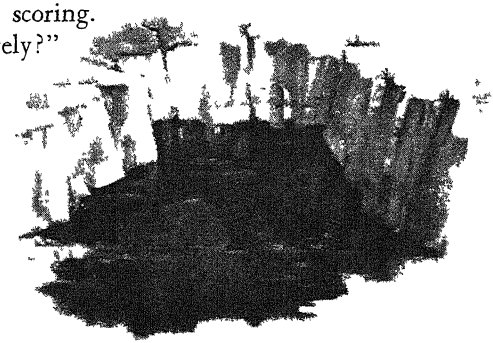
The water lay still and billiard-green under the ledge where we stood. The edges of the pool were as sharply-quarried as those of a swimming-bath. On two sides the water was held in by a right-angle of the high cliff; at the side where we stood, the flat, bare rock dropped away in front of us to the water-level some four feet below.

DONALD pointed down towards one of the slanting slabs of stone that showed through the water like a buttress shoring up the side of the pool. "Do you see that bit of rock?"

"That nice, regular oblong? It looks as if it had been shaped."

"It has been shaped." Something in his voice made me look at him. He said: "Look at it again. Don't you see the marks?"

I peered down: "I . . . think so. Do you mean what looks like a sort of rough diagonal scoring. That's not artificial, surely?"



"Those marks were sharply scored originally; chisel marks. Even still water will smooth out a stone surface, given time."

I stood up and looked at him. "Given time?"

"I don't know how long, because I don't know when this part of the quarry was flooded. But those stones down there were quarried about two thousand years ago."

"Two thou——" I stopped short and said, rather blankly: "You mean the *Romans?*"

"That's my guess."

"Oh! But, Donald, there's nothing Roman at Whitescar, or Forrest. If there were, the one-inch map would have it marked."

"Exactly," said Donald. "But this year, with the dry spring, the water levels down just when I chance to be poking about, and I see the stones. What's more we know the Romans quarried their building stone locally whenever they could."

I stared at him stupidly for a moment or two. "I . . . see! You think there may be something else? Some Roman work hereabouts that hasn't been found yet?"

He pushed his pipe down into a pocket. "I've no idea," he said, "but there's nothing to stop me looking. And now, if you're ready, I'll be taking you down to Whitescar, and then I'll get along and see Mr. Forrest, and ask his leave to go poking around in his policies."

Chapter Thirteen

WHEN we got to the farm, it was to find a slightly distracted Lisa watching for me with some tale of disaster that involved a cream trifle, and Tommy, the black and white cat, who, as I explained to Donald, was eating for eight.

"That beastly Tommy," Lisa said. "Annabel, would you be an angel and go to West Lodge with Mr. Seton as far as the gardens? I rang up for some strawberries, and Johnny Rudd said he'd have them ready."

Something must have shown in my face, for I saw her recollect herself for the first time for days. She had forgotten that I had not yet been across to the gardens. I saw her eyes flicker with calculation and then she turned to Donald, but I spoke first.

"Of course," I said, "I'll come along with you now, Donald, if I may, and walk back with the strawberries by the short cut, and then we can get on with hulling them. I'd like to see Johnny Rudd, anyway."

THE OLD walled kitchen-garden of Forrest Hall lay beside the stables, about a quarter of a mile from the West Lodge, where Adam Forrest now lived. Donald stopped the car at a wrought iron gate set into the wall, and I got out.

"Now, don't bother about me. It's just as quick going back across the fields. I'll see you at dinner."

"If you're sure——" said Donald, and the car moved off. I pushed the gate open.

The last stretch of the lane we had driven along had been deep under trees. Now, I walked through the gate into a brilliance of sunshine that made me narrow my eyes. It wasn't only the brightness, however, that gave me pause. In this garden, filled with sun and warmth and scent, everything, at first sight, was as it might have been in the eighteenth-century hey-day of Forrest.

All along one wall was the glass, and under it I could see peaches and apricots and grapes all carefully pruned and trained, and beneath them the homely forests of tomatoes and chrysanthemum seedlings. Along the other three walls were the espaliered fruit-trees, and down the centre of the garden was a broad walk of turf, bordered on either side with all the splashing colours of an English June: lupins, delphiniums, peonies, irises, poppies, Canterbury bells. The rest was all order and usefulness—peas and beans and regimented fruit bushes.

At first I couldn't see anyone about at all, and walked quickly towards the greenhouses, peering to right and left. Then I saw a man working among raspberry canes near one of the walls. He had his back to me, and was wearing faded corduroys and a blue shirt. He didn't seem to hear my approach, being intent on fastening a bird-net back securely over the canes.

I stopped on the path near him. "Johnny?"

He straightened and turned. "I'm afraid——" he began, then stopped.

"You?" For the life of me I couldn't help sounding unbelieving. This was certainly the Adam Forrest I had met and spoken with a few nights ago, but now, facing him in the broad glare of the afternoon, I could see how different he was from my almost dreamlike picture of him. Some part of my mind said that of course it was only common sense to wear rough clothes for a rough job, but another part, that I had

not known existed, linked the shabbiness with the lines on his face and the greying hair that I hadn't seen by moonlight, and winced away from them with a pity I knew he didn't want, and that I had no right to feel. I noticed that he was wearing gloves, and remembered my taunt about earning his living the hard way, and was sorry. This place must be killing work.

He smiled at me, narrowing his eyes against the sun. They were grey-blue and puckered at the corners. He spoke easily, as if there could be no constraint between us.

"Hello. Were you looking for Johnny Rudd? I'm afraid he's gone."

"I came for some strawberries. Johnny told Lisa he'd save them."

"Then he'll have left them up in the packing-shed. Come and see."

We walked up the path together. I saw him eyeing me, as curious as I had been, no doubt, to see what the daylight showed.

I said: "Have you met Julie's young man? Donald Seton?"

"No. Why?"

"He came across with me just now, to see you, but he thought you'd have finished for the day, so he went along to the Lodge."

"Oh? What's it about, d'you know?"

"Yes, but I'll leave him to tell you himself." I caught his quick look, and smiled a little. "Oh don't worry, it's nothing personal. You're still quite safe."

He stopped and turned. I noticed all at once that his eyes looked tired, as if he didn't sleep well. "Safe? *I?*"

"Indeed, yes. If you're not an accessory after the fact, I don't know what you are. You never came across to Whitescar, and tried to catch me out in front of Grandfather. You've done nothing. Why?"

"I honestly don't know." He hesitated. "I suppose it's because I think rather a lot of old Mr. Winslow, and oddly enough, I'd trust you over Julie, who seems to me the only other person who matters. As long as Julie comes to no harm, I don't much care how you and Connor fight it out. If you can get it, I shan't grudge you your 'competence.' "

"You needn't worry; you can trust me over Julie."

He sighed. "The odd thing is that I believe you. Here's the packing-shed. Come and see if Johnny's left your strawberries."

The shed was big and cool, it's basic smell, of geraniums and damp peat, dizzily overlaid by that of a tank crammed full with sweet peas.

It was as orderly as the garden: there were shelves of plant-pots and boxes, in graded sizes; raffia hanging in loops that looked as if they would never dare tangle or snap; and two or three pairs of clean cotton gloves on a hook beside the window. On a bench to the left of the window were two punnets of strawberries.

"Enough, do you think?" he asked.

"I think so. Look, I brought a basket. We can tip them all in together, and you can keep the punnets."

"It comes cheaper that way," agreed Adam gravely.

I gaped at him for a second. Lisa hadn't mentioned money and I had none with me. "I—I'm afraid I can't pay for them now."

"I'll charge them," said Adam imperturbably. He reached for a notebook, and made a jotting. Then he caught my eye on him, and grinned, and suddenly, in the shadowed shed, the years fell away, and there was the lover of the moonlit tryst. I caught my breath. He said: "Whitescar runs an account. They don't seem to have time to grow any vegetables there themselves . . . I doubt if anybody has even touched the garden" —he shut the book and returned it neatly to its place—"since you left. Careful! You're spilling those! What did I say to make you jump."

"You know quite well. You did it deliberately. You . . . got under my skin."

"That makes two of us," said Adam; at least, that's what I thought he said, but he muttered it under his breath, as he turned his head quickly to the door, adding aloud: "I suppose this is Mr. Seton?"

"Oh . . . hello, Donald. Yes, Mr. Forrest's still here. Mr. Seton, Adam . . . I told Mr. Forrest you wanted to see him, Donald, but I managed to keep quiet about the reason."

"You needn't have done that." He turned to Adam. "I don't know if Annabel told you, sir, but I'm an archaeologist; I'm attached to the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments and just at present I'm in charge of the work being done up at West Woodburn."

"I had heard that excavating has started there," said Adam. "Just what are you hoping to do?"

"Well, the Commission's job is to list and describe all existing Roman monuments. . . ." Donald gave a very brief account of the work he was engaged on, and then passed, with an admirably Scottish economy of time and words, to the business of the moment.

I lingered while he described how he had seen the "Roman stones" in the quarry. It was obvious then that he had caught Adam's interest. "And you think it likely, if that quarry *was* originally Roman, that there may be some Roman buildings near by?"

"Fairly near, at any rate," said Donald. "That's why I wanted to ask your permission to have a look round if I may."

"With the greatest of pleasure. Go where you like. But surely anything there was, will be deep under several feet of earth by now?"

"Oh yes. And I did wonder if you could help me. Can you remember anything that might be an overgrown pit . . . or an artificial bank?"

"Not at the moment. The only pit I can think of is the old ice-house near the Forrest Lodge, but that can hardly—wait a minute! I can't be sure, but somewhere, when I was a child . . . I saw a stone . . . Roman I'll swear."

He broke off, his brows knitted in an effort of memory. "The cellars!" he exclaimed finally. "We weren't allowed there, but they were accessible." He grinned. "I remember that we were rather intrigued for the moment, as children are, by the carving on the stone. It was upside down, which made it harder to make out what it said, even if we could have——"

"What it *said?*" Donald's voice was sharp, for him.

Adam looked surprised. "Yes. Didn't you say the stones were carved? There was some sort of lettering, as far as I remember, and a carving of some kind . . . an animal."

"I said 'chiselled,' not 'carved.' It sounds as if you may have seen an inscription. Of course it was quite usual for later builders to use Roman stones again."

"This is really rather exciting. If it turns out to be an inscription of the ninth Legion or something, will Forrest's fortune be re-made?"

"Well," said Donald cautiously, "you might get it on to TV The house is a ruin, isn't it? Is it possible to get into the cellars?"

"I think you'll find you can get down. Look, I'll make you a plan."

He reached to the near-by shelf for a paper, drew a couple of lines, then, with a subdued exclamation of irritation, pulled off his gloves. "I can't write in them. Do you mind?"

"Mind?"

Then I saw. His hands were horribly disfigured. The skin was white

and dead-looking, glassed like polythene, and here and there were puckered scars that showed purple. I suppose most people stared like that, sick and shocked, for a moment or two.

I said: "Adam, your hands, your poor hands What did that to your hands?"

"I burnt them."

The fire at Forrest. His wife. *"The bed was alight by that time. He managed to drag the bedclothes off her, and carry her downstairs"*

He had reached one of those terrible hands for the discarded gloves. He hadn't taken his eyes off my face. He said gently: "I'll put them on again. I'm sorry, I forgot you wouldn't know. It's rather a shock, the first time."

"It—it doesn't matter. Don't for me . . . I—I've got to go." I reached blindly for the basket. I could feel the tears spilling hot on to my cheeks, and couldn't stop them. I said shakily: "I've got to hurry back. Goodbye," and, without looking at either of them, my head bent low over the basket, I almost ran out of the packing-shed.

Chapter Fourteen

As it turned out, there were more than enough strawberries for supper. Julie didn't come back.

The dinner, though delicious, could hardly be said to be festive. It was as if all the accumulated tensions of the last few days had gathered that evening at the dining-table, building slowly up like the thunderheads that stood steadily on the horizon outside.

Con had come in early, rather quiet, with lines from nostril to chin that I hadn't noticed before. Grandfather seemed to have recruited his energies with his afternoon rest: his eyes were bright and a little malicious as he glanced round the table, and marked the taut air that hung over the meal. It was his moment of power, and he knew it.

If it had needed anything to bring the tension to snapping point, Julie's absence provided it. I drew what fire I could, chattering shamelessly, and had the dubious satisfaction of attracting most of the old man's attention, some of it so obviously affectionate—pointedly so—that once or twice Con's glance crossed mine like the flicker of blue

steel. Afterwards, I thought, when he knows, when that restless, torturing ambition is stilled at last, it will be all right

The end of the meal came, and still no Julie. As we all left the dining-room, Con said abruptly: "I'm going to telephone Nether Shields," and he left us.

In the drawing-room Lisa poured coffee stolidly. "Nothing will have happened," I said to Grandfather. "You'd have heard if there'd been an accident. Don't worry, she'll turn up soon."

"If a tyre burst when they were miles from anywhere"—Donald put in a comforting oar—"that could delay them."

"As long as this? It's nine o'clock."

I glanced anxiously at Grandfather. The bright malice had faded. He looked his age, and more, and the hand with which he pushed aside his untasted coffee was shaking a little.

Con came into the room. "Nothing," he said tersely. "Mrs. Fenwick knew Julie was due back here for dinner. Bill said he'd be home by seven. No sign." Then, abruptly, "If I'm wanted, I'll be in the field," and he went out again.

Half an hour went by. I must have shown how worried I was, and Grandfather took to saying, at shorter and shorter intervals: "Where on earth can the child have got to?" or alternatively, "Why the devil couldn't she have telephoned?" I wasn't surprised when, almost too soon for civility, Donald rose to his feet, and said he thought he had better be going. No one made any attempt to stop him.

THE washing-up was done, and Lisa and I were back in the drawing-room, she with some mending for Con, myself playing a rather abstracted game of cribbage with Grandfather, when at length we heard a car enter the yard. Almost before it had drawn to a halt, one of its doors slammed; there was a short pause, and faintly, the sound of voices, then the car moved off again, and high heels tapped quickly across the yard to the kitchen door. We heard Julie cross the kitchen lobby and push open the green baize door to the hall. Then the hasty steps tapped their way across the hall, and were on the carpeted stairs.

Grandfather put his cards down with a slam, and shouted: "Julie!"

The flying steps stopped. There was a pause.

"Julie!"

She came slowly down the stairs again, and stood in the doorway for a moment before she came into the drawing-room. Her hair was ruffled from the ride; her colour was high, and her eyes shone brilliantly. She looked very lovely; she also looked like the conventional picture of the young girl fresh from her lover's embrace, confused by the sudden light and the watching eyes. For a moment I wondered, with a sinking heart, if her interest in Bill Fenwick could be serious, but then—I'm not quite sure how, except that Julie and I were so much alike—I knew, with relieved certainty, that the confused brilliance of her glance was due, not to love and embarrassment, but to sheer temper.

"Julie!" Grandfather sounded angry. "Where have you been? We've spent the whole evening waiting for you, and worrying. Heaven knows I don't expect you to remember anything so completely unimportant as your grandfather's birthday, but I do think——"

"I'm sorry, Grandfather." Her voice was tolerably composed. "I—we meant to get back. I didn't forget—there was an accident."

I looked up quickly. "I take it nobody's hurt?"

She shook her head. "No, it was a silly thing. We weren't going fast —somebody backed out of a garage straight into us."

"Was Bill's car damaged?"

"Yes. The door panel was dented, and he'd hit the front wheel. Then there was all the fuss, and the police——" she swallowed. "I—we couldn't help it, really we couldn't."

"Of course you couldn't," I said. "Look, honey, have you had supper? Because——"

"You could have telephoned," said Grandfather sharply. He was breathing hard, and the thin fingers twitched among the fallen cards.

"I'm sorry," said Julie again, but with something too sharp and driven-sounding in her voice. Outside, the yard gate clashed, and I saw her jump. "I know I should have, but I didn't think of it till we were on the way home." Her voice quavered and she stopped.

Lisa said: "Donald Seton was here." It was impossible to tell from her tone whether or not she was actuated by deliberate malice.

Julie bit her lip and looked ready to cry. "I—I didn't think he was coming."

The baize door opened and swung shut on a *whoosh* of air. Con came quickly across the hall, to pause in the open doorway behind Julie.

He had changed back into his work-clothes before he had gone up to the field, and in breeches and open-necked shirt he looked tough, and also extremely handsome. And this for the same reason as Julie. He, too, was in a flaming temper, and it didn't need much gazing in the crystal ball to guess that the pair of them had just had a monumental row.

Julie didn't turn her head on his approach. She merely hunched one shoulder, and said to Lisa, on a strained, high note: "Did Donald say anything?"

"What about?" asked Lisa.

"No, Julie," I said.

Grandfather's hand scuffed irritably at the cards on the table. "What's all this? Young Seton? What's he got to do with it?"

"Nothing," said Julie. "Nothing at all!" Her voice went thin and high. "And nor has Con!" She flung him a glance over her shoulder, about as friendly as a volley of swan-shot.

"Con?" Grandfather's eyes went from one to the other. "Con?" he repeated querulously. "Where does Con come into this?"

"That's just it!" said Julie, dangerously. "He doesn't for all he seems to think he's the master here, and I'm answerable to him! Can you *imagine*——" She checked herself, and went on in a voice that trembled insecurely on the edge of self-control: "Just now, as we came back, Bill had to stop the car for the gate at High Riggs—well, Con saw fit to come over, and ask me where the hell I'd been (I'm sorry, Grandfather, but I'm only saying what *he* said), and why was I so late, and, as if that was not bad enough, he started pitching into Bill! As if it had been Bill's fault! Even if it *had,* it's not *your* business"—swinging on her cousin—"to start anything like that! Bill was furious, and I don't blame him! I had to apologize for you!"

"You know, Connor," said Grandfather, mildly enough, "you ought not to have done this. It wasn't young Fenwick's fault that——"

"That's not the point!" cried Julie. "Don't you *see?* Even if it *had* been Bill's fault or mine, it's *none of Con's business!* If I choose to stay out all *night,* that's *my* affair!"

"And mine," said Grandfather, with sudden grim humour.

"All right," said Julie, "yours! But not Con's! He takes too dashed much on himself, and always did! It's been going on for years, without anyone noticing, and now *this* sort of thing is the last straw as far as I'm

concerned! Being ticked off like a naughty child, and all because"—she mimicked Con's voice—"it was vital we should all have been here tonight." She swung back on him. "So what? I've explained to Grandfather. You're not the master here yet, and as far as I'm concerned you never will be!"

"Julie!" I said sharply. "That's enough!"

They ignored me. Grandfather thrust his head forward, his eyes intent under scowling brows. "And just what do you mean by that?"

"Just," said Julie, "that this is my home, and Con—why Con doesn't even *belong* here! And I'm beginning to think there isn't room for both of us, not any more! If I'm to be able to go on coming here——"

Grandfather slammed the cards down on the table in front of him. "And now, perhaps you'll let me speak! What you appear to forget, all of you, is that this is *my* house . . . still! And let me make this clear: while I'm alive I'll expect civil conduct in it, or you, Julie, and you, Connor, can both of you go elsewhere! And now I'm going to bed." And he put shaky hands to the arms of his chair.

Julie said raggedly, on a sob: "I'm sorry, Grandfather. I—I didn't mean to upset you." She turned past Con as if he didn't exist, and ran out of the room and up the stairs.

Con hadn't moved. His face seemed to have emptied even of anger, and gone blank.

"Well?" said Grandfather, harshly. "What are you waiting for?"

Con turned on his heel without a word, and went back across the hall. The baize door whispered itself shut behind him.

I stooped over Grandfather's chair. "Darling, don't upset yourself. Julie's a bit strung-up tonight; she's more shaken than she knows . . . and Con . . . Con's been working far too hard, you know he has, and I guess he's tired. They'll apologize in the morning."

He looked up at me, almost vaguely, as if the effort of that last speech had exhausted him. He said, muttering it to himself rather than to me: "Always the same. Too highly-strung, that's what it is, your mother always said so; and Julie's the same. History repeats itself." The faded eyes focused on me then. "Annabel. Should have married Con in the first place, as I wanted. Settled the pair of you. Settled this. I'm going to bed."

He went out slowly. Lisa and I were left looking at one another.

She had put her work composedly away. As she moved towards the door, I said quickly: "I wouldn't upset him by saying anything else."

"I wasn't going to. I'm going to bed. Good night."

It didn't even seem strange at the time that it was Lisa who should go unconcernedly upstairs, and I who should look for Con.

He was in the kitchen, pulling on his gumboots. He glanced up briefly, then down again. His face still wore that blind, shuttered look.

I said: "Con, don't pay any attention. She's upset because she and Donald quarrelled. She doesn't really think those things."

"It's my experience," said Con woodenly, thrusting his foot down into the boot and dragging it on, "that when people are upset they say exactly what they do think. She was quite startlingly explicit, wasn't she?"

I said: "Don't let it hurt you."

"Hurt me?" He looked up again at that. The blue eyes held a glitter I didn't like. Then he smiled, a deliberately charming smile that made goose-pimples run along my spine. "You can't know how funny that is, Annabel, my sweet."

"Well, my dear," I said calmly, "Funny or not, try to see it in proportion. Julie and Bill were involved in a minor accident tonight. That's what made her late, and distressed her even more. It'll blow over."

"What makes you explain to me?" He stood up and reached for the jacket that hung on the back of the door, "It's none of my business. Lisa and I are only the hired help."

"Where are you going?"

"To the buildings. There's something wrong with the cooler, and I'll have to get it put right." That quick, glittering look again. "I suppose even Julie would be content to let that be my business? Or would it be interfering too much with the running of her home?"

"Con, for pity's sake——"

"Sweet of you to come and bind up the wounds, dear girl, but I assure you they don't go deep."

"Are you sure?" His hand was already on the door-latch. I said: "Listen. I ought not to tell you, but I'm going to. You've no need to worry any more."

He stopped, as still as a lizard when a shadow falls across it. Then he turned. "What d'you mean?"

"You do belong here. You've made your place . . . the way you said . . . with your two hands; and you do belong. That's all I—ought to say. You understand me. Let it go at that."

There was a silence. The shutters were up again in his face. It was impossible to guess what he was thinking, but I should have known. He said at length: "And the money? Did he tell you?"

I nodded.

"Well?"

"I don't know if I ought to say any more."

He said, savagely, in a low voice: "Whose side are you on? By God, you've had me wondering, you're so thick with Julie and the old man! What right have you got to keep this to yourself?"

"Very well. He's divided the money between Julie and me, except for a small sum, which you get outright. Two-thirds of the capital is nominally mine. That can be passed to you, just as we planned." I smiled. "Don't forget the blackmail's mutual."

He didn't smile back. He hardly seemed to be listening. "Julie. Will she fight the will? She'll have grounds."

"I'm sure she won't. She doesn't want the place."

"No, she just thinks I should be out of it." He turned away. "Well, since the boy's not afraid of hard work, he'd better go out and get on with it, hadn't he?" And he left abruptly.

For a moment I stayed where I was, frowning after him. For heaven's sake, I thought, did I have to add to the tangle by feeling sorry for Con? I shook myself, impatiently, and went slowly upstairs, trying to decide how much of the truth about myself to tell Julie. Something had to be told her: it was imperative that she should be made to realize what Con was capable of. Then it occurred to me that, if her mind were cleared tonight with regard to Donald, she would happily leave the Whitescar field open for Con from now on. Let us have peace

I went to the door of her room and knocked softly. There was no reply. No light showed under the door. She could surely not be in bed yet? I tapped again and said softly: "Julie: it's me, Annabel."

No answer. As I stood, irresolute, I heard a soft step in the passage beside me. Lisa's voice said calmly: "She's gone."

I looked at her blankly. "What?"

She smiled. " 'History repeats itself,' he said, didn't he? She's run out

on us." Reaching past me, she pushed the door open, and switched on the light.

"Look," she said. The bedroom was deserted. "I saw her from my window. She went over the bridge."

"Over the bridge?" I went swiftly to the window. The moon was not yet strong, and the narrow footbridge that led from the garden gate could barely be seen. "But why?" I swung round. "Lisa, you *were* joking, weren't you? She can't possibly have—oh, no!" This as I pulled open the wardrobe door. "Her things are here."

"Don't worry. She won't have gone far. No such luck."

I shut the wardrobe door with a sharp little click. "But where can she have gone?"

"Heaven knows." Her voice was as composed and uninterested as ever.

"If she'd only waited to see me——"

"With you," said Lisa, "talking to Con in the kitchen?"

I stared at her for a moment. Then I said: "For goodness' sake! Do you mean to say she thought I was ganging up on her? With Con?"

"What did you say to Con?"

"Nothing much. I wanted to apologize for Julie, but he was in a hurry to go out."

"Oh?" said Lisa. The toffee-brown eyes touched mine for a moment. "Well, I shouldn't wait up. Good night."

Left to myself, I crossed again to the window and strained my eyes. There was no sign of movement from the garden, or the river-path. Down to my right, I could see the lights from the byres where Con was working, and hear the hum of machinery, unfaltering in its beat *"History repeats itself,"* Lisa had said.

Something tugged at the skirts of my mind, jerked me awake. A formless, frightening idea became certainty. Julie creeping softly downstairs, and out . . . Con, in the kitchen, seeing her pass the window Then, the girl running along the river in the dark, up the steep path where the high bank shelved over the deep pool

"He was going out," I had said, and Lisa had given me that look. *"Well, I wouldn't wait up."*

The machinery ran smoothly from the byre. The lights were on.

I didn't wait to grab a coat. I slid out of the room, and ran like a hare.

Chapter Fifteen

I DIDN'T even look to see if Con were in the buildings after all. The something that had taken over from my reasoning mind told me he would have gone upriver as far as the stepping-stones at the end of the lane. There he could cross, and wait to intercept Julie on the path above the pool. I ran.

On the other side of the bridge, the path sloped up steeply, runged like a ladder with the roots of trees. Above me the trees hung in still, black clouds, not a leaf stirring. It was very dark and I stumbled badly, stumbled again, and slowed to a walk.

I called shrilly: "Julie! Julie! Con!"

Then, not far ahead of me, I heard Julie cry out. It wasn't a scream, just a short, breathless cry, that broke off short as if she'd been hit in the throat.

I called her name again, and ran forward through the whipping boughs of alder and hazel, and out into the little clearing above the pool.

Julie was lying on the ground, at a point where the path skirted the drop to the pool. She lay half on her back, with one arm flung wide, and her head at the brink of the drop. I saw the loose fall of her hair, pale in the moonlight, and the still paler blur of her face. Con was beside her, down on one knee. He was stooping over her to take hold of her.

I cried: "Julie! No!" and ran out from under the trees, only to stop short as a shadow detached itself from the other side of the clearing, and crossed the open space in four large strides. Before Con could so much as turn his head, the newcomer's hand shot out, and dragged him back from Julie's body. There was a startled curse from Con, then the sounds of a brief, sharp struggle, and the crashing of hazel-bushes.

After the first moment of paralysing shock, I had run straight to Julie. Her eyes were shut, but she seemed to be breathing normally, and I could neither feel nor see any marks of injury on her.

Her rescuer trod behind me. I said: "She's all right, Adam. I think she's only fainted."

He sounded breathless, and I realized that he, too, had heard the cries, and come running. The noise that I had made must have masked



his approach from Con. "What's going on?" he demanded. "What's he done to her?"

"Nothing, as far as I know. I think you've probably jumped the gun a bit . . . Be quiet, she's coming round."

Julie stirred, and gasped a little. Her eyes fluttered and opened fully, dark and alive. They turned to me. "Annabel? Oh, Annabel"

Behind me came the crash and rustle of hazel-boughs. Julie said: Con——"

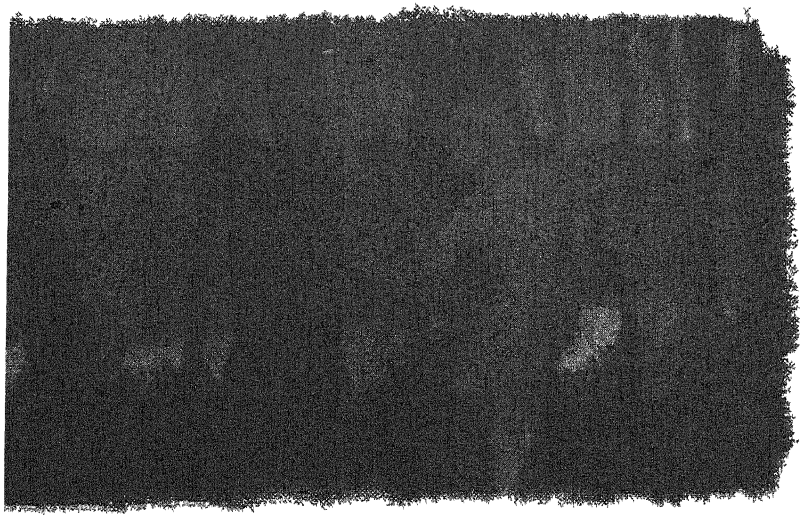
"It's all right, Julie, nothing's going to happen. Mr. Forrest's here with us. Lie quiet."

She whispered, like a child: "Con was going to kill me."

I heard Adam draw in his breath. Then Con's voice, rather thickly, behind us: "Forrest? What the bloody hell do you think you were doing? Have you gone mad?" He put the back of his hand up to his mouth.

Adam said quietly: "Did you hear what she said?"

"I heard." Con brought his hand away from his face, and I saw him looking down as if he could feel blood on it. He said violently: "Don't



be a damned fool. What sort of story's that? Kill her? Are you crazy, or just drunk?"

Adam regarded him for a moment. "Come off it. I heard her cry out. For a start, you can tell us why she fainted."

"How the devil do I know? I hadn't spoken a damned word to her, before she went flat out on the path."

She had shut her eyes again, and turned her face into my shoulder. Con said angrily: "Why don't you tell them it's true, Julie?" He swung back to the silent Adam. "The simple truth of the matter is, Julie and I had words tonight, never mind why, but some pretty hard things were said. Afterwards I found out that she'd been involved in a car accident earlier in the evening, and I was sorry I'd made the scene with her. I'd seen her go flying out of the house, and I knew how upset she'd been Annabel, blast it all, tell him this is true!"

"Apart from Con's feelings," I said, "to which I've never had a clue, it's quite true."

"So," said Con, "it occurred to me to come across and intercept her, and tell her I was sorry for what had happened, only no sooner did she

see me in the path than she let out a screech, and keeled clean over. I went to see what was the matter, and the next thing was, you were manhandling me into that damned bush. Don't worry, I'll take your apologies for granted. But *you*"—he addressed Julie on a scarcely conciliatory note—"stop making these damned silly accusations! I'm sorry I scared you, if that's what you want me to say, and I'm sorry if you've hurt yourself. Now for pity's sake try to get up, and I'll help Annabel take you home!"

But as he came towards us, Julie shrank a little against my shoulder. "Keep away from me!"

Con stopped. Adam was standing between him and Julie, and, though I couldn't see his expression, I realized he was at something of a loss. The situation seemed to be hovering uncertainly between melodrama and farce. Then Con said: "Oh, for God's sake!" and turned on his heel and left the clearing. We could hear him, unhurrying, making his way downstream towards the bridge. Between us, Adam and I helped Julie to her feet. She still seemed dazed, and was shivering a little. I pulled her coat close round her. "Come on, darling, can you walk? We must get you back. Where were you going, anyway?"

"To Donald, of course."

"But it's miles to West Woodburn! . . . Well, you'll see him tomorrow. Come along now, you're all right with Adam and me."

She went forward across the clearing, but so uncertainly that Adam said, "I'd better carry you." And he took her up in his arms.

The back door was standing open when we got back. The kitchen was dark, and the house seemed quiet. At least, I thought, snapping on the light, there was no sign of Con.

Adam paused inside the door, to say a little breathlessly: "Shall I take her straight upstairs? I can manage."

Julie lifted her head, blinking in the light. "I'm all right now, really. Put me down, I'm fine."

I said: "Put her in the rocking-chair, Adam. I'll heat some soup—the silly little thing didn't have supper."

"You didn't hurt yourself when you fell?" Adam said to her.

"I—I don't think I can have." She prodded herself experimentally, and then smiled up at him. "I think I'll live."

There was no answering smile on his face. "Then can you tell us

now," he asked, "why you said that your cousin was going to kill you?"

I set the soup-pan on the stove with a rap. Even a hint of this would finish Grandfather and nothing could be proved. "You've heard what happened," I said steadily. "If we talk much longer, we'll disturb Grandfather, and he's had enough upset for one night. I know that most of what Con told you was true, and almost certainly the last bit was, as well. Julie saw him, got a sudden fright, and fainted. I'm fully prepared to believe that's just what happened."

"I'm sure you are," said Adam, and Julie turned her head at his tone.

"For heaven's sake!" I said crudely. "You're surely not *still* trying to make out it was attempted murder!"

I heard Julie take in a little breath. "Annabel——"

"It's all right, darling, I know you said it, but you didn't know just what you were saying. He'd half scared you to death, looming up like that through the trees. Now, if you're ready——"

"Will you please let your cousin speak for herself?" said Adam.

I looked at him for a few moments. "Very well, Julie?"

Julie looked doubtfully up at him. "Well, it's true," she said. Her voice held a puzzled uncertainty that was uncommonly convincing. "I know I *said* he was trying to kill me, and I—I think I must really have thought so, for a moment, though why, I can't quite tell you." She broke off and knitted her brows. "But actually, it happened just as Con said He—he never touched me. I know it sounds silly, but I'm sure I'd never have fainted if it hadn't been for the car accident and—and no supper . . . and then when I saw him, suddenly, like that, in the dark——" She gave a tremulous smile—"and let's face it, I *was* feeling a bit wary of him, because I'd said some pretty foul things to him, and . . . well, that's all I remember. Mr. Forrest, I'm sorry——"

"Think nothing of it." Adam's face was wooden. "I'd better go." He turned to Julie. "Good night. I hope you'll feel quite all right in the morning." The door shut very softly behind him.

THE cooler-house was clean, shining and empty. The machinery hummed. I crossed the floor under the harsh light of the unshaded bulbs, and threw the switch over. The machinery stopped. I looked through an open door into the byre. There, too, the lights glared on emptiness. I went in. My steps sounded incredibly, frighteningly loud,

and so did the snap of the light-switch as I clicked it off. I turned back into the cooler-house.

Adam came quietly in and stood there, just inside the doorway. I stopped dead. I must have looked as guilty as sin. I said nothing.

After a while he said: "Covering up for your accomplice? Or would you like to explain why Connor left the machinery running?"

"Look," I said, striving to sound no more than reasonable, "I know what you think, but, believe it or not, we told you the truth! For goodness' sake, don't try to take this thing any further!"

"Do you really think I can leave it there, after tonight?"

"But nothing *happened* tonight!"

"No, because I was there, and possibly because you were, too."

"You surely can't think that I——!" I checked myself. "But you heard what Julie told you."

"I heard what you persuaded her to say. I also heard her say that Con was going to kill her."

"She admitted she had nothing to go by! She got a sudden fright."

"She trusts you. That's something I find particularly hard to take. She's another fool, it seems, but she at least has the excuse of being young, and knowing nothing against you."

"Listen, Adam . . . I was frightened tonight . . . I've told you that Con might be dangerous——"

"I've done enough listening. You told me you're in some racket or other which will turn out right in the end. You persuaded me to keep out of it, God knows how, but you did. Now, tonight, this happens. The time has come for me to stop trusting you, you must see that."

I said after a pause: "Well? I can't stop you. What are you going to do? Telephone the police?"

I thought he was disconcerted, but he said steadily: "I promised I'd warn you. I'll give you twenty-four hours, as from now, to make your break with Connor, and leave. I don't care what story you tell, but you must break this thing up, and go. And don't imagine that, in the event of Mr. Winslow's death, you can come back. I promise you that if 'Annabel' is a legatee in his will and turns up to lay claim to a single penny of it, I'll have you investigated so thoroughly that you won't see the outside of Durham jail for ten years. And what will happen to Connor and his sister, I neither know nor care."

Through the ensuing silence a tap dripped, a small maddening sound, like a reiterated note on a harpsichord, a little out of tune.

"Adam." Rigid self-control made my voice colourless almost to stupidity. In the harsh light his face was as hard as stone, and as strange. There was nothing in it but weariness and contempt. "Adam, I—I didn't mean to have to tell you now, because I—I felt as if I couldn't face it just yet. But I can't let you go on thinking" I stopped, and took a breath, as though the place was stuffy and I needed the air. "I lied to you the other night by the sundial."

"Really?" The lift of his brows was cruelly ironic.

"Oh, not the way you think! It was easier to let you believe I was a liar and a cheat than to—to have to face you as myself. You see," I finished, "I really am Annabel Winslow."

"Well?"

"You . . . you don't believe me?"

"I'm afraid I'm in no mood for games tonight."

"But I *am* Annabel! I am!"

"I assure you that if you stay around, you'll have plenty of chance to prove it."

My voice was beginning to shake loose from that precarious control. "If you forced that on me, mightn't *you* find it a bit embarrassing?"

He laughed. "All this, and blackmail too?"

I blazed round at him. "All right! So you don't believe me! Go on, call my bluff. What do you want to ask?"

He stood there for a moment longer, his eyes vacant almost. Then, without a word, he turned on his heel and went out of the shed.

I FOUND I was leaning against the chilly metal of the cooler. The shaking had stopped, but my brain felt bruised and incapable of any thought except a formless desire to go to bed, and sleep.

"Well, by God!" said Con, just behind me.

Even then, I turned slowly and stared at him with what must have been a blank stupid look. "Where were you?" Then, my voice tautening: "How much did you hear?"

He laughed, and lounged out of the inner shed into the light. He came close to me, and stood there, swaying backward on his heels, graceful and collected. "Oh, I kept my distance! I thought Forrest and

I hadn't much to say to one another, girl dear. And I thought that maybe you'd handle him a bit better than I could. And it seems I was right, me jewel. Was it you switched the engines off?"

"Yes. As an alibi for murder it wasn't bad, on the spur of the moment, Con."

The brilliant eyes narrowed momentarily. "Who's talking about murder now?"

"I am. You switched the engines on, and the lights, so that they could be seen and heard from the house, and then you ran upstream and across the stepping-stones, and met Julie in the clearing."

The bright eyes were narrow and dangerous. He had stopped swaying. Suddenly I realized he was drunk. "And if I did?" he said gently.

"Adam was right. You did mean to kill her there, Con."

There was a silence. He said again, softly: "And if I did?"

I said steadily: "Only this, that if you thought I'd stand for anything like that, you must be an imbecile. What sort of person d'you think I am? Why, you blundering criminal fool, did you really think I'd see you kill Julie, and not send the whole works sky-high?"

He was laughing now, completely unabashed. "All right, me darlin', murder's off the cards, is it? But you know, I'm not the fool you make me out to be. You weren't supposed to know anything about it. Oh, you might have suspected all you liked in the morning, when her poor drowned body came up on the shingle, but what could you prove? You'd have kept quiet, and held your grandpa's hand, wouldn't you?"

"Oh, my God," I said, "and to think that I felt sorry for you tonight."

"Well," said Con cheerfully, "there's no harm done, is there, except a little keepsake from Forrest?" He touched his cheek. "Did you manage to shut the bastard up?"

"I don't know."

He had begun to rock on his heels again. Somewhere behind the brilliant gaze was amusement, and wariness, and a speculation that made my skin crawl. " 'Adam,' " wasn't it now? How do you come to be calling him 'Adam,' girl dear?"

My heart gave a jerk that sickened me. I said, and was relieved to find that my voice sounded nothing but very tired: "That was one thing you slipped up on. They must have got to Christian names. When I went today to get the strawberries he called me 'Annabel' And

now I'm going in. You're luckier than you deserve that nothing's happened; and I can't even guess what Adam Forrest'll do tomorrow, but, just at the moment, I don't care. And this is the last time I cover up any single thing for you."

As I reached the doorway I looked back. He was standing looking after me with an expression where I could only read amusement and affection. He looked handsome and normal and sober and very nice.

He smiled charmingly: "Goodnight, Annabel."

I said shortly: "Don't forget to put the light out," and went quickly across the yard.

Chapter Sixteen

I HARDLY slept that night. I lay watching the wheeling moonlight outside the open curtains, while my mind, too exhausted for sleep, scratched and fretted its way round the complications of this absurd masquerade. I suppose I dozed a little, for I don't remember when the moon went down and the light came. I remember realizing that the dark had slackened, and then, later, a blackbird fluted a piercing stave of song alone in the cold dawn. I got up and went to the window. The dew was thick, grey almost as frost. The air smelt thin like polished silver. Through a gap in the trees to my left I saw the distant glint of chestnut, where the Forrest colt moved, cropping the wet grass.

Sometimes, I think, our impulses come not from the past, but from the future. Before I had even clearly thought what I was doing, I had slipped into grey trousers and a pale yellow shirt, had dashed cold water on my face, run a comb through my hair, and was sliding downstairs as quietly as a shadow. I tiptoed out through the kitchen, and ten minutes later, bridle in hand, I was letting myself in through the gate of the meadow where Rowan grazed. He had raised his handsome head as soon as I appeared, and now watched intently, ears pricked forward. I moved towards a gap in the hedge where there were a couple of railings. I sat on the top one and waited, dangling the bridle.

Rowan was coming. He paced forward slowly, with a sort of grave beauty, like a creature out of the pages of poetry written when the world was young and fresh. His ears were pricked so far forward that

the tips almost met, his eyes large and dark, and mildly curious. His nostrils were flared, and their soft edges flickered as he tested the air.

Then he was a yard away, pausing: just a large, curious hardly-broken young horse staring at me with dark eyes that showed, at the edge, that unquiet hint of white. I said: "Hi, Rowan," but I didn't move. He stretched his neck, blew gustily, then came on. Still I didn't move. His ears twitched back, forward again. His nostrils were blown wide, puffing sweet breath at my legs, at my waist, at my neck. He mouthed my sleeve, then took it in his teeth and tugged it.

I put a hand on his neck, and felt the muscles run and shiver under the warm skin. I ran the hand up to his ears, and he bent his head. My hand slipped up to the long tangled forelock, and held it. I slid slowly off the fence-bar, and he didn't try to move away, but put his head down and rubbed it violently up my body, jamming me back against the railings. I laughed at him and said softly: "You beauty, you lovely boy, quiet now . . ." and then turned him, with the hand on his forelock, till his quarters were against the railings, and his forehand free. Then with my other hand, still talking, I brought the bit up to his muzzle. "Come along now, my beauty, my darling boy, come along." The bit was between his lips and against his teeth. I thought he was going to veer away, but he didn't. He opened his teeth, and accepted the steel warm from my hand. The bit slipped softly back into the corners of his mouth, and the bridle slid over his ears; then the rein was looped round my arm and I was fastening the throat-lash, rubbing his ears, sliding my hand down the springy arch of his neck.

I mounted from the top of the fence, and he came up against it and stood as if he had done it every day of his life. Then he moved away from it smoothly and softly, and only when I turned him towards the length of the field did he begin to dance and bunch his muscles as if to defy me to hold him. I'm not, in fact, quite sure how I did. He went at a canter to the far end of the long meadow, where there was a narrow wicket giving on the flat grass of the river's edge. He was biddable enough at the wicket, so that I guessed that Adam Forrest had taken him this way and taught him his manners at gates. But, once through, he danced again, and the sun danced and dazzled too, down through the lime leaves, and the feel of his bare back warm and shifting with muscle between my thighs was exciting, so that I went mad all at once,

and laughed and said, "All right, have it your own way," and let him go; and he went like a bat out of hell, with that smooth lovely motion that was as easy to sit as an arm-chair; and I stuck on like a burr to his withers with too-long-disused muscles that began to ache, and I said, "Hi, Rowan, it's time we got back. . . ."

For a second or two after I began to draw rein, he resisted, leaning on the bit, and I wondered if I could manage to check and turn him. I slackened the bit for a moment to break his stride, and, as it broke, pulled him in. He came sweetly, ears flickering back to me, and then pointing again as he turned. I sang to him, mad now as the morning: "Oh, you beauty, you love, home now, and steady" I drew him to a walk, and when we came to the wicket he stopped and moved his quarters round for me to reach, as gentle and dainty as a dancer.

I said: "All right, sweetheart, that's all for today," and slid down off him and ducked under his neck to open the wicket. He pushed through, eager now for home. I turned to shut the wicket, and Rowan wheeled with me, and then snorted and threw up his head, and dragged hard at the rein I was holding.

I said: "Steady, beautiful! What's up?" And looked up to see Adam Forrest a yard away, waiting beside the wicket, watching me. He had brought a bridle too, and there was a saddle perched astride a rail.

It seemed a long time before he spoke. I know I had time to think of his own reactions as well as my own; to imagine his resentment, shame, anger, bewilderment. What he said was merely: "Why did you do it?"

The time had gone past for evasions and pretences; in any case Adam and I had always known rather too well what the other was thinking. I said: "I'd have thought that was obvious. If I'd known you were still at Forrest I'd never have come. When I found I had to face you, I felt caught, scared—oh, anything you like, and when you wouldn't just write it off and let me go, I suppose I got desperate. So when you decided I was an impostor, I let you go on thinking it. It was—easier, as long as I could persuade you to keep quiet about me."

Between us the horse threw up his head and fidgeted with the bit. Adam was staring at me as if I were some barely decipherable manuscript he was trying to read. I added: "Most of what I told you was true. For some time I'd wanted desperately to come back, and try to make it up with Grandfather, and when Mrs. Grey—my last employer

—died, she left me a little money along with a few keepsakes." I smiled briefly, thinking of the gold lighter and the car permit left so carefully for Con and Lisa to see. "Well, I managed to pay for my passage and I came straight up to Newcastle and got a temporary job. Of course, for all I knew Grandfather was dead"

Half absently, I pulled a swatch of grass, and began to wisp the horse. I had hardly looked at Adam. It was queer that when a part of your life, your very self was dead, it could still hurt you.

"I hadn't wanted to make too many inquiries, in case Con somehow got to hear of it. I'd even taken my rooms in the name of Mrs. Grey. Whatever had happened, I wanted to apply to the lawyers for Mother's money, you see, only I wasn't sure if I dared risk Con's finding out I was home. Well, I waited a day or two, wondering what to do——"

"Just a minute," Adam said. "Why should you not 'dare' let Connor know you were home?"

I ran the wisp along Rowan's neck. "He tried to kill me one night, along the river, just near where we found him with Julie."

He moved at that. "He *what?*"

"He'd wanted to marry me. Con hadn't a hope then—or so he thought—of getting the property any other way, so he used to—to harry me a bit. Well, that night he threw a scene, and I wasn't exactly tactful; I made it a bit too clear that he hadn't a hope, then or ever, and . . . well, he lost his temper and decided to get rid of me." I lifted my eyes, briefly: "That's how I guessed, last night, that he'd have gone to find Julie. That's why I followed her."

"Why did you never tell me?" His tone was proprietorial, exactly as it might have been eight years ago, when he had had the right.

"There was no chance. It happened the last night I was here. I was on my way home, after I'd left you in the summer-house at Forrest. I ran into Con on the path."

"Oh, my God."

"When I got home that night, after getting away from him, I was pretty hysterical. I told Grandfather about Con, and he wouldn't believe me. He'd been angry with me for months because I wouldn't look at Con. He suspected I'd met somebody, and all he would say was 'where have you been?' because it was late, and he'd sent Con to find me himself. I think he just thought Con had lost his head and had been trying

to kiss me, and all I was saying about murder was pure hysteria. There was a pretty foul scene: you can imagine the kind of things that were said. But you see why I ran away? Partly because of what happened between you and me, and because I was scared stiff of Con . . . and now because Grandfather was taking his part, and I was afraid they would discover about you. If Crystal had found out . . . the way she was just then"

"I begin to see. How did you fall in with Connor, when you came back from Canada?"

"I took a risk which I shouldn't have taken, and went to look at Whitescar. I didn't even get out of the bus, just went along the top road one Sunday. I got out at Chollerford, to get the bus along the Roman Road. I—I wanted to walk along the Wall, to—to see it again."

Nothing in his face betrayed the fact that lay sharply between us; that it was on the Wall that he and I had sometimes met.

I said steadily: "Con saw me, and followed. He recognized me, of course, or thought he did. When he came up on me I was scared stiff, and then I saw he was just doubtful enough for me to pretend he'd made a mistake. So I gave him the name I'd been using, and got away with it." I went on to tell of the interview on the Wall, and the subsequent suggestions made to me. "And finally, when I realized Con and Lisa had it in for Julie, and Grandfather had had a stroke, I knew I'd have to come back. And . . . well, this was one way of getting home with Con not lifting a finger to stop me. So I agreed. And it went off well enough, until I found that you *were* still here"

He said with sudden impatience: "That horse isn't sweating. Leave him alone. We'll turn him loose." He slid the bridle off, and Rowan swerved away from us, then began to graze.

For the first time we really looked at one another. Adam said roughly, "I know why you went! Even discounting Con and your grandfather, you'd reason enough! But I still can't see why you never sent me a single word, even an angry one."

The silence stretched, like a thread that wouldn't snap. When I spoke, it was in a voice heavy with knowledge, the instinct that sees pain falling like a shadow from the future. "But you had my letter."

Before he spoke, I knew the answer. The truth was in his face. "Letter? What letter?"

"I wrote from London," I said, "almost straight away."

"I got no letter." I saw him pass his tongue across his lips. "What did it . . . say?"

For eight years I had thought of what I would have liked to say at this moment. Now I only said, gently: "That if it would give you even a little happiness, I'd be your mistress, and go with you wherever you liked."

The pain went across his face as if I had hit him. He said, quite simply, as if exhausted: "My dear. I never even saw it."

"Adam, don't look like that. It's over now. I waited a few days; I—I suppose I'd really only gone to London to wait for you; I'd never intended, originally, to go abroad. But then, when I telephoned—did she tell you I'd telephoned?" At his expression, I gave a little smile. "Yes, I telephoned you, too."

"Oh, my dear. And Crystal answered?"

"Yes. I pretended it was a wrong number. I didn't think she'd recognized my voice. I rang again next day, and Mrs. Rudd answered. She didn' know who I was; she just told me the house was shut, and that you and Mrs. Forrest had gone abroad. It was then I decided to emigrate. I didn't write to you again. I—I couldn't, could I?"

"No." He was still looking like someone who has been mortally hurt.

"You couldn't help it, if a letter went astray—*Adam!*"

His eyes jerked up to mine. "What is it?"

I licked my lips, and said hoarsely: "I wonder what did happen to that letter? Do you suppose"—I wet my lips again—"*she* took it?"

"*Crystal?* How could—oh, my God, no, surely? Don't look like that, Annabel; the damned thing's probably lying in some dusty dead-letter office in Florence. No, my dear, I'll swear she never knew."

"Adam, no one's ever told me—how did Crystal die?"

He said harshly: "It was nothing to do with this. There were years between. For one thing, no letter turned up among her papers after her death, and you can be sure she'd have kept it."

I said: "Then she *did* kill herself?"

He seemed to stiffen himself like a man lifting a weight. "Yes."

Another of those silences. I was thinking, without drama, well, here was the end of the chapter; all the threads tied up, the explanations made. There was nothing more to say.

The same thought showed momentarily in Adam's face, and with it, a sort of stubborn resolution. He took a step forward.

I said: "Well, I'd better be getting back before Con sees I've been on Rowan."

"Annabel——"

"Adam, don't make me keep saying it's finished."

"Don't make me keep saying it isn't! Why the hell d'you think I found myself trusting you against all reason and judgment if I hadn't known in my blood who you really were? And tell me this, my dear dead love, why did you cry when you saw my hands?"

"Adam, you're not being fair!"

"You care, don't you? Still?"

"I—don't know. No. I can't. Not now."

He said sharply: "Because of Crystal?"

"We'll never know, will we? It'd be there, between us, what we did."

He said, grimly: "Believe me, I made my reparations." He turned his hands over, studying them. "And this was the least painful of them. Well, my dear, what do you want to do?"

"I'll go, of course. It won't be long. Grandfather's looking desperately frail. Afterwards I'll see things straight with Con, somehow, and then I'll go. We needn't meet. Adam, life does just go on," I said desperately, "and you change, and you can't go back. You have to live it the way it comes. You know that."

He said, not tragically, but as if finishing a quite ordinary conversation: "Yes, of course. But it would be very much easier to be dead. Good-bye." He let himself through the wicket, and went away across the field without looking back.

Chapter Seventeen

LIFE goes on, I had told Adam. When I got back to the farm the men were arriving for the day, and the cattle were filing into the byres. I managed to slip into the stables and hang the bridle up again without being seen, then went into the house. Up in my room I changed into a skirt and fresh blouse and felt better.

I couldn't eat breakfast when the time came, but there was no one

there to remark on the fact. By then Con was already in the fields, Grandfather wasn't up, Mrs. Bates was busy elsewhere, and Lisa was invariably silent at breakfast-time. Julie was taking hers in bed—this at my insistence.

Donald rang up shortly before half past eight, to ask for news of last night's truants. I told him only enough to reassure him—that Bill Fenwick's car had been involved in a mishap, and that Julie was unhurt, and wanting to see him some time that day. If, I added with a memory of the colleague from London, he was free

"Mphm," said Donald. "I'll be along in half an hour."

"Donald! Wait a minute! She's not up yet!"

"Half an hour," said Donald, and rang off.

I warned Julie, who hurled herself out of bed with a shriek and a "What shall I *wear?*" that reassured me completely as to her well-being and her feelings. Obviously, on this score, I need worry no longer.

But I had still to talk to Con. Later, I thought, when they stop to eat, I'll go up to the field

JULIE and Donald had gone off for the day, and I had gone to work in my neglected garden. But work, for once, didn't help. As I tackled the weedy beds with fork and hoe, memory cut back at me ever more painfully. Eight years ago I had dug and planted here, dreaming of Adam Suddenly I found that tears were dripping on my hands.

It was still an hour short of lunch-time when Betsy called me from the house. I thought there was urgency in her voice, and when I stood up and turned, I could see her agitation.

"Oh, Miss Annabel! Oh, Miss Annabel! Come quickly, do!"

I dropped my weeding-fork, and ran. "Betsy! Is it Grandfather?"

"Aye, it is that"

I took her by the shoulders. "Betsy! What's *happened?* Is he dead?"

"Mercy, no! But it's the stroke like before, and he was right as rain when I took up his breakfast"

She followed me up the passage, still talking volubly. She and Lisa had been in the kitchen, preparing lunch, when Grandfather's bell had jangled violently. Mrs. Bates had hurried upstairs, to find the old man collapsed in the wing-chair. Mrs. Bates and Lisa, between them, had got him to bed, and then the former had come for me.

Most of this she managed to pour out in the few moments while I ran to the kitchen and plunged my filthy hands under the tap. I had seized a towel, and was roughly drying them, when Lisa appeared in the doorway. She showed none of Betsy's agitation, but I thought I saw a kind of surreptitious excitement in her eyes.

She said abruptly: "I'm afraid it looks serious. Annabel, will you telephone the doctor? The number's on the pad. Mrs. Bates, that kettle's almost hot enough; fill two hot-water-bottles. I must go back to him. When you've got Dr. Wilson, Annabel, go and fetch Con."

"Lisa, I must see him. You do the telephoning. I can——"

"You don't know what to do," she said curtly. "I do. Now hurry."

She turned quickly away, as if there was no more to be said. I flung the towel down, and ran to the telephone. Luck was in, and the doctor was at home. Yes, he would be there as quickly as possible.

As I went back into the hall, Lisa appeared at the head of the stairs.

"Did you get him?"

"Yes, he's coming."

"Good. Now, will you go——?"

"I want to see him first." I was already starting up the stairs.

"There's no point in your seeing him. He's unconscious. Go and get Con. He's in High Riggs. He must know straight away."

"Yes, of course," I said, and went on, past her, straight into Grandfather's room.

The curtains had been half drawn, shading the sunny windows. The old man lay in bed, his only movement that of his laboured, stertorous breathing. I went across and stood beside him, trying to calm my agitated thoughts. Then I turned to meet Lisa's eyes. If I had had any doubts about the naturalness of this crisis, they were dispelled by the look on her face. It was still excited but she made no attempt to hide the excitement from me. And it was now also puzzled as she stared back at me. "It's a mercy, isn't it?" she muttered.

"A mercy?" I glanced at her in surprise. "But he was perfectly all right——"

"Ssh, here's Mrs. B. I meant, a mercy it didn't happen yesterday, before Mr. Isaacs came. God's providence, you might even say."

"You might," I said drily. Yes, I thought, it was there, clear to see: Lisa, single-minded, uncomplaining, initiating nothing. Efficient,

innocent Lisa. No doubt at all, when Doctor Wilson came, she would help him in every possible way.

I said abruptly: "I'll go and get Con."

THE SUN beat heavy and hot on High Riggs. A third of the field was shorn, close and green-gold and sweet-smelling. Over the rest of the wide acreage the hay stood thick and still in the heat. The clover, and the plumy tops of the grasses made shadows of lilac and madder and bronze across the gilt of the hay. The tractor, with Con driving, was coming straight towards me. I shouted above the noise of the motor: "Con! You'd better come to the house! It's Grandfather!"

The tractor stopped with a jerk that shook and rattled the cutter-blades. Con switched off the motor, and the silence came at us with a rush. "What is it?"

I said, shouting, then lowering my voice as it hit the silence: "It's Grandfather. He's taken ill."

I saw something come and go in his face, then it was still again. It was as if something in him was holding its breath, in a sort of wary eagerness. A hunter's face. He began to whistle between his teeth, a hissing noise that sounded exactly what it was, a valve blowing down a head of steam. I think I hated Con then, more than I ever had before: more than when he had tried to bully me into marrying him: more than when I had wrenched away from him and run, terrified, to Grandfather: more than when he had tried to claim Adam's place as my lover, and told the stupid lie about the child: more than when he had brought me back, an interloper, to damage Julie.

THE DOCTOR had come, stayed, and then, towards evening, had left.

Grandfather was still unconscious. He lay on his back, propped on pillows, breathing heavily, and with apparent difficulty, and sometimes the breath came in a long, heaving sigh.

I hadn't left him. I had pulled a chair up to one side of his bed. Con was on the other. He had spent the afternoon alternately in sitting still as a stone, with his eyes on the old man's face, or else in fits of restless prowling, silent, like a cat, which I had stood till I could stand it no longer, then had curtly told him to go out of the room unless he could

keep still. He had shot me a quick look of surprise; then he had gone. Heaven knows what was showing in my face. I had ceased to try and hide it from Con, and I could not, today, find it in me to care

And so the day wore on. Julie hadn't come home. After the doctor's visit, Con had sent one of the men up in the car to West Woodburn. On his return he reported that Julie and Donald had been up there before luncheon, and then had gone off somewhere in Donald's car.

"Forrest Hall!" I said. "That's where they'll be! I'm sorry, Con, I'd quite forgotten." I explained quickly about the alleged Roman carving that Adam had described. "Ask him to go to Forrest Hall—he'd better go by the river-path, it's quicker than taking a car up past the gates."

But the man, when he returned, had found nobody.

The doctor came back just before seven, stayed a while, then went again. I sat there, waiting, and watching the old man's face, and trying not to think.

Con was back there, too, on the other side of the bed, watching me.

The day drew down, the sky dark as slate and heavy with thunder.

Soon after eight the rain began; big, single, heavy drops at first, splashing down on the stones, then all at once in sheets, real thunder-rain, streaming down the windows as thickly as gelatine. Suddenly, the room was lit by a flash, and the thunderstorm was with us; long flickering flashes of lightning, and drum-rolls of thunder getting nearer; a summer storm, savage and heavy and soon to pass.

Still no Julie. They wouldn't come now. They would stay and shelter till it was past.

I went to draw the curtains, and then came back to the bed. Grandfather stirred, gave an odd little snore, and opened his eyes. After a long time they seemed to focus, and he spoke without moving his head. The sounds he made were blurred, but clear enough.

"Annabel?"

I leaned forward into the pool of light, and slid a hand under the edge of the bedclothes till it found his.

"Yes, Grandfather. I'm here. It's Annabel."

"Con?"

I nodded towards him. "He's there."

The eyes moved. "Con."

"Sir?"

"I'm—ill."

"Yes," said Con.

"Dying?"

"Yes," said Con.

I gasped in protest, but what I might have said was stopped by Grandfather's smile—the ghost of his old grin. He said: "No lies." I knew then Con was right.

"Julie?"

"She'll be here soon. The storm's kept her. She's been out with Donald all day. She doesn't know you're ill."

I thought he looked a query.

"You remember Donald, darling. Donald Seton. He was here last night at"—my voice wavered, but I managed it—"your party."

I could see him concentrating, but it seemed to elude him. I leaned nearer to him, speaking as distinctly as I could. "You liked Donald. He's going to marry Julie, and they'll live in London. Julie'll be very happy with him. You needn't worry about——"

An appalling crash interrupted me. The flash, the long, growing rumble and crack of chaos, then, after it, the crash. Through all the preoccupations in that dim room it hacked like a battleaxe.

Matthew Winslow said: "What's that?" in a voice that was startled almost back to normal.

Con was at the window, pulling back the curtains. His movements were full of a suppressed excitement, which gave them more than their usual grace. He came back to the bedside, and bent over his great-uncle. "It was a long way off. One of the Forrest Hall trees, I'd say." He put a hand on the bed, where Grandfather's arm lay under the blankets, and added carefully and distinctly: "You don't need to worry. It's not near the buildings. It's done no damage here."

Grandfather said, clearly: "You're a good boy, Con. It's a pity Annabel never came home. You'd have suited well together."

I said: "Grandfather——" and then stopped.

As I put my face down against the bedclothes, to hide it from him, I saw that Con had lifted his head once more and was watching me, his eyes narrow and appraising.

There was only myself and Con in the room.

Chapter Eighteen

SOMEWHERE, downstairs, a door slammed, and there were running footsteps. The door was thrust open—no sick-room entry, this—and Julie ran into the room. Her hair and her clothes were soaked and streaked with mud. She looked wildly from me to Con while she fought for breath to speak. Her eyes, her whole head, jerked from one to the other. "Annabel . . . Con . . . Con"

"Julie!" I came between her and the bed. "Darling! Whatever's the matter?"

But something in the way I moved had got through to her. For the first time, she looked at the bed. I saw the shock hit her. She wavered, bit her lip, and said, like a child who expects to be punished for behaving badly: "I didn't know. Annabel, I didn't know."

I had an arm round her. "Yes, darling, I'm sorry. It happened just a few minutes ago. It was very sudden, and he seemed quite content. I'll tell you about it later; it's all right If there's something else wrong, you can tell us now. What is it?"

She shook in my arms. She was trying to speak, but could only manage a whispered: "Could you—please—please you and Con——"

It was apparent that there would be no sense out of her yet. I spoke across her, deliberately raising my voice to a normal pitch, and making it sound as matter-of-fact as I could: "Con, you'd better go down and tell Lisa, then would you telephone Dr. Wilson?"

"The phone's off," said Julie.

"Off?"

"Lisa says so. It went off just now, she says. She's been trying. It'll be the ivy tree. It was split . . . the lightning. It just split in two." Julie's voice sounded thin and empty, but unsurprised. "Half came down right across the lodge, you see. It brought the rest of the roof down, and a wall, and——"

I said sharply: "Julie, pull yourself together. What's happened? Is it something to do with the ivy tree? Were you near the lodge when it—oh, my God, Con, she'd have been just about passing it when we heard it come down . . . Julie, is it Donald?"

She nodded, and then went on nodding, like a doll. "He's down there. Underneath. The tree came down. It just split in two——"

"Is he dead?" asked Con.

I felt the shock run through her, and her eyes jerked up to meet his. She said sensibly enough: "No. I don't think so, but he's hurt, he can't get out. We have to go We were in the lodge, you see, and the wall came down when he went down the steps, and he's hurt, there underneath. He can't get out." Abruptly she thrust the back of one grimy hand against her mouth, as if to stifle a cry.

Con, behind me, said, surprisingly: "Don't worry, we'll get him out." He ran past us, down the stairs and across the hall, pausing with a hand on the baize door. "Go and get into the car. Torches and brandy, Annabel, you know where they are. I'll not be a minute. There's some pieces of timber in the barn: we may need them if there's any shoring-up to be done."

The door swung shut behind him. We ran downstairs. Lisa was in the hall, and I paused to ask her: "Are any of the men still around?"

"No. It's Bates's day off, and the others went when the rain started. There's only Con here. You'd better go too, hadn't you? I'll go upstairs."

"Lisa" She guessed as soon as I spoke; I saw it in her eyes. "Yes, just a few moments ago But would you go up? It seems terrible just to—to run out like this."

She merely nodded, and mounted the stairs to his room.

THE BIG Ford was there in the yard. We had hardly scrambled into the front seat, when Con appeared, a shadowy, purposeful figure laden with some short chunks of timber, an axe and a ditcher's spade. He heaved these into the back of the car, slid in behind the wheel, started the motor, and swung the car round in a lurching half-circle and through the yard gate all in a moment.

Then he said abruptly: "What happened, Julie? Try to put us right in the picture: just where is he, how is he hurt, can we get to him?"

"It's the cellar," she said. "You know the place is a ruin; well, it had all fallen in where the old cellar stairs used to be, so they spent most of the day shifting that, and then——"

"They?" I said.

"Yes. Mr. Forrest had told Donald——"

"Mr. Forrest's there?"

I thought my voice sounded quite ordinary, even flat, but I saw Con turn to look at me, and then away again.

"Yes," said Julie. "They'd been to the Hall cellars first—oh, well, never mind, but it turned out it was actually the cellars at the lodge——"

"The Roman stones," I said. "Oh dear heaven, yes, of course, they were still looking?"

"Yes, oh yes! But I—I was waiting outside, and——"

"Is he hurt?"

"I told you. He's down in the——"

"*Adam Forrest.* Is he hurt?"

"I don't know. But when the place came down they were both inside, and when I could get through the dust I tried to pull some of the stuff away from the cellar door, but Mr. Forrest shouted for me to hurry and get help, because Donald was hurt, and he didn't know how much because he hadn't found the torch yet."

In the light from the dash I could see Con's face; it was preoccupied, and I thought it was only with the car, with holding the lurching, bouncing vehicle as fast as possible on an impossible road. Fast, violent action, a summons coming out of the dark like a fire alarm: that suited Con. Just as (I had had time to see it now) it suited him to save Donald; Donald would take Julie away. And presently the Ford shot between the posts where the white gate swung wide, and skidded to a splashing halt in front of the looming, terrifying mass of debris that had been the ivy tree.

THE lightning had split the great tree, so that it had literally fallen apart, one vast trunk coming down across the lane that led to the road, the other smashing straight down on the ruined lodge.

We thrust ourselves out of the car, and ran to the black gap of the doorway. Con hesitated, but Julie pushed past him, through the chaos of smashed masonry and tangled boughs that blocked the hallway.

She called: "Donald! Donald! Are you all right?"

It was Adam who answered her, his voice sounding muffled and strained. "He's all right. Have you brought help?"

"Con and Annabel. Here, Con, they're down here."

Con had shoved after her, stopping under the barrier of one biggish

branch, and was kneeling by what seemed in the torchlight to be a gap in the wall where a door must have stood. I followed him. He flashed the torch into the gap, lighting a flight of cellar steps.

Twelve steps led steeply downward, looking undisturbed; at the bottom was a short stone flagged passage which must have led to the cellar door. Now, the doorway had disappeared. Where it had been, was a pile of rubble where the ceiling and one wall had collapsed, taking with them the splintered wreckage of the doorposts. But the cross beam still held. It had fallen and was wedged now at an angle, within a foot or so of the floor, roofing a narrow, triangular gap which was the only way through to the cellar beyond. Upon the beam pressed the weight of the broken wall, and the broken building above, all thrust down in their turn by the pressure of the fallen tree.

Adam was lying right underneath the beam, face downward. His feet were towards us, and the top half of his body was out of sight. For one sickening moment I thought that the great beam had fallen clean across his back, then I saw there was a gap of perhaps four inches between it and his body.

"Forrest?" called Con softly. "Are you all right?"

"I'm all right." Adam didn't move, but he spoke breathlessly, as if he was making some violent effort. "Seton's inside here; there's another pile of the stuff—just past the beam, and I can't—get any purchase to move it. He'll be safe enough . . . it's a groined ceiling, it won't come down in there, and he's lying clear of this. . . . I can just reach him, but I can't get—any farther—and we'll not get him out till the stuff's moved. How long will the doctor be?"

"We couldn't get him. The lines are down."

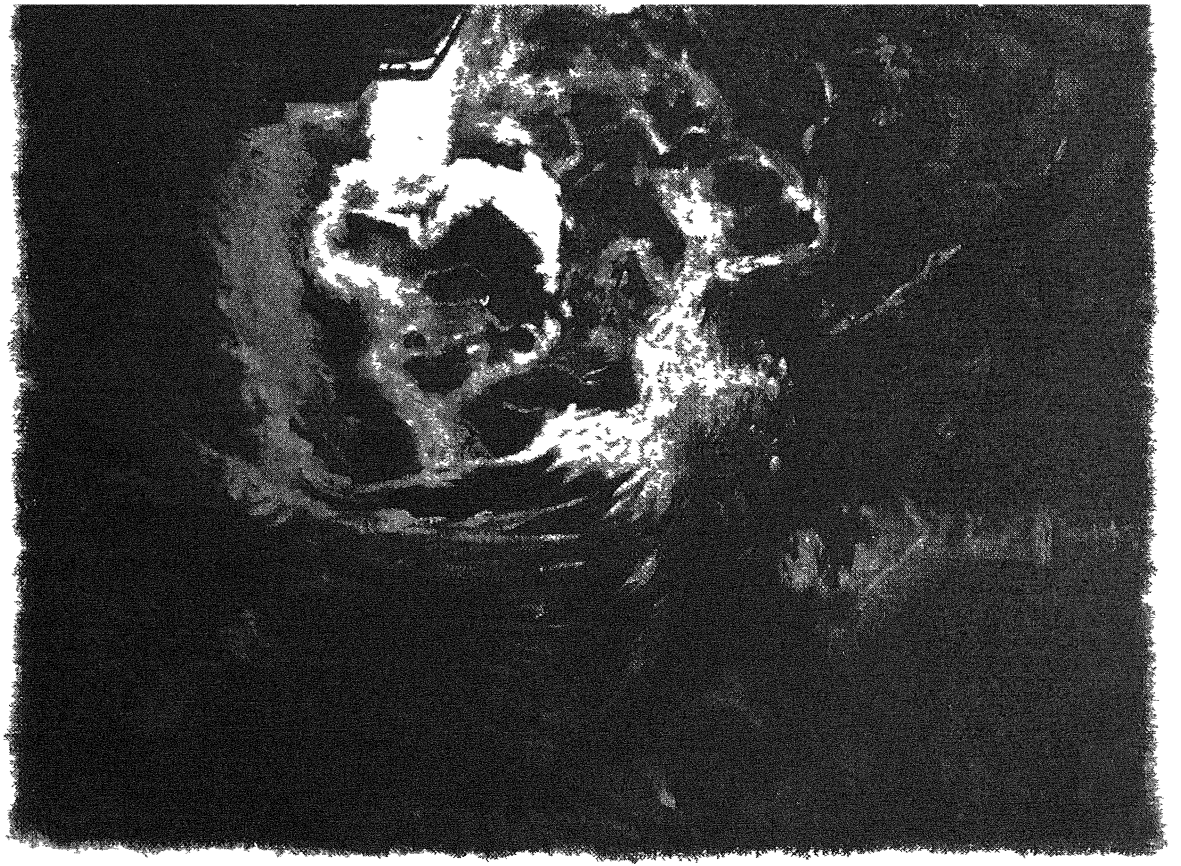
"Dear God."

"Look, if Seton's not badly hurt, you'll simply have to leave him, for the time being. If you come back, we could probably shift enough stuff to get through to him. In any case, if this place isn't shored up pretty damn quick, I wouldn't give twopence for your own chances."

Adam said painfully: "My dear man, you'll have to prop it round me as best you can. I can't leave him. He's torn an artery."

Beside me, Julie gave a little gasp like a moan. I said: "Julie! Get a way cleared back to the car, and fetch the props."

"Yes," she said, "yes," and began, with savage but barely effectual



hands, to push and break a way back through the tangle to the doorway.

"I've got a tourniquet on, of a sort." Adam's voice was still muffled. "And I don't think he's losing much, now. But it's tricky in the dark, and I can't hold it indefinitely. You'll have to get the doctor straight away. Annabel?"

"Yes?"

"The car's there?"

"Yes."

"Will you go? If you can't find Wilson——"

Julie turned among the wet branches. "The tree's down across the road, too. We can't take the car, and it's four miles."

I said: "The telephone at West Lodge, Adam? It's the same line as Whitescar, isn't it?"

"I'm afraid so."

I was on my feet. "I'll go on foot. It's all right, Julie, once I get to the road I'll get a lift."

Con said: "It's more than four miles, it's nearer six. And you might not get a lift. Your best chance is to drive to Nether Shields."

"But there's no bridge for a car!" cried Julie.

"No," I said, "but I can drive right up to the footbridge at West Lodge, and then it's barely two miles up to the farm."

Julie said on a sob: "Oh God, it'll take an hour." Then I heard her cry, "A horse! That's it!"

I was propping my torch where it would help Con, who was gingerly widening the gap in the wall. I turned. "What?"

"A horse! If you took the mare you could go straight across the ford and across the fields. You'd be there much quicker!"

Con said: "That's an idea," then I saw it hit him. He paused fractionally, with his fingers curled round a lump of sandstone, and I caught his bright sidelong look up at me. He said: "The mare's not shod. Take Forrest's colt. He'll let you." Even then, it took me two heartbeats to realize what he was doing. I had been right. None of this touched him.

Adam's voice came again from beyond the beam. It sounded, now, like the voice of a man at the limits of his control. "Annabel, listen, my dear . . . It's an idea. He'll go, for you, I think The second door in the stableyard. You know where the bridles are."

Con and I stared at each other in the light of the torches. He was no longer smiling. "Yes. I know," I said.

Adam said: "Take care, my dear. He doesn't like thunder."

"I'll be all right. I can manage him. Hold on, Adam darling."

As I went, I saw Con staring after me.

Chapter Nineteen

IT WAS important not to think about the scene I was leaving behind me in the dark lodge. I put it out of my mind, threw open the gate to the West Lodge track, and ran to the waiting car. It seemed to take an hour to turn her, reversing between the pillars of the gateway. I drove my foot down as far as I dared, and tried to remember the road.

Two fields first, I remembered, then trees bordering the track. Then a gate, standing open; a sharp rise, and here was the straight half-mile across a high heathy pasture. Then the sudden, sharp dip of the descent towards the river and West Lodge, the swift, curling drop.

I had forgotten just how steep the hill was, and how sharp the turn. I stood on the brake, but as we dived for the river, the car went down the drop like an aircraft making for the touch-down. I saw the bend coming, and put all my strength into getting her round. I felt the front wheel mounting the edge, swinging, thrown wide by the force of our turn. I felt the rear swing, too, mount, pause

The front of the car drifted, slid in the mud of the verge. The wheel topped the bank, was over. The car lurched crazily over a nine-inch drop to the shingle, hit the edge of the drop with her undercarriage, and stopped dead, with the water sliding by not a yard from the bonnet.

I clambered out. The stableyard lay no more than fifty yards away, at the foot of the hill. I retained enough wit to switch the ignition off, and the headlights, and then I abandoned the car, and ran.

WHEN I got to the stable door my hand went automatically to the light-switch, and, as the light snapped on, I reached for the bridle. Then I leaned back against the wall, and regarded the Forrest colt, letting my eyes get used to the light, and the horse used to the sight of me.

He was in a loose-box opposite the door, facing away from me, but with his head round towards me, and ears pricked, inquiringly, slightly startled. I began to talk, and the effort to steady my voice steadied me. When I saw the ears move gently, I went into the loose-box.

He didn't move, except to cock his head higher, and a little sideways, so that the great dark eyes watched me askance, showing a rim of white. I slid a gentle hand up the crest of his neck towards his ears. He lowered his head then, and snuffled at the breast of my blouse.

I said: "Help me now, Rowan, beauty," and cupped the bit towards him. In seven seconds, as smoothly as a dream, I had him bridled. In ten more, I was leading him outside into the night. I didn't take time for a saddle. I mounted from the edge of the water-trough, and he stood as quietly as a donkey at the seaside.

Then I turned him towards the river. He went willingly with that lovely long walk of his that ate up the yards. I had no idea if I could get him to cross the water which, swelled a bit by the recent thunder-rain, was coming down with sound and fury over its treacherous boulders. It would be bad enough crossing by daylight, and in the dark it was doubly hazardous.

As I put him at the bank I could smell thyme and water-mint, and the trodden turf as his hoofs cut it. He hesitated on the edge, checked, and began to swerve away. I insisted. Good-manneredly he turned, hesitated again, then, as his forelegs went down the first foot of the drop, he stopped, and I saw his ears go back. My own impulse forward was supplied instantaneously. He snorted, then lunged forward suddenly and slithered down into the water.

I held him together as he picked his way across between the streaming boulders. I was saying love words that I thought I had forgotten. His hoofs rang on the stones, and the swirling water splashed against his fetlocks, then it was to his knees; he stumbled once, and drenched me to the thigh. But he went on, and in no time the small shingle was crunching under his feet. He went up the far bank with a scramble that almost unseated me, then plunged forward to meet the track, which lay clearly marked in the moonlight between its dark verges.

He took it fast, in that eager, plunging canter that, normally, I would have steadied and controlled. But he couldn't, tonight, go fast enough for me The canter lengthened, became a gallop; we were up the

slope and on the level ground. There was a gate, I knew. I peered ahead uncertainly, trusting the horse to see it before I did, hoping he knew just where it was

He did. I felt his stride shorten, and next moment saw—or thought I saw—the dim posts of a fence, joined with invisible wire, with the shapes of cattle beyond. The way ahead was clear. The gate seemed to be open . . . yes, I could see it now, lying back, wide open, against the wire fence.

Rowan flicked his ears forward, then back, and hurtled down the track at full gallop.

I wondered, briefly, why the cattle hadn't crowded through the gap, then we were on it, and I saw. The gate for the beasts stood to the side, and was shut. And, straight across the way, which I had thought was clear, lay a cattle-grid, eight feet of treacherous, clanging iron grid that, even if it didn't break Rowan's legs, would throw us both

No time to stop him now. Two tremendous strides, and he was there.

This time, he thought for me. As the grid gaped in front of him, looking, in the dark, like a wide pit across his path, he steadied, lifted, and was over, as smoothly as a swallow in an eddy of air.

And then all at once, ahead of us, were the massed trees, and the lights of Nether Shields.

MR. FENWICK and his two sons were in the yard when I got there—they had come out to take a look round after the storm. It was all I could do to get Rowan in past them, through the gate, but he went in the end, fighting every inch of the way. One of the men shut the gate behind us, and would have reached for the bridle, but I thought the horse would rear, and said breathlessly: "Leave him. It's all right. Keep back"

Someone said: "It's Forrest's," and another: "It's the Winslow girl," and then Mr. Fenwick's voice came quickly: "What is it, lass? Trouble?"

I could hardly speak. I managed to say, somehow: "A tree's down on the old lodge. Forrest Hall. Someone's hurt. Mr. Forrest's there too. They're trapped, and the whole place looks like coming down on them. The tree's blocked the lane to the road and the phone's off at Whitescar. Is yours working?"

Mr. Fenwick was a man of swift action and few words. He said merely: "Don't know. Sandy, go and see. Is it for the doctor?"

"Yes. Yes. Tell him a cut artery, we think, and to come quickly." —Sandy went in at a run—"And could you come yourself—all of you, straight away? There's only Con and Julie there——"

"Aye. Bill, get the Land-Rover out. Ropes, torches, crowbars."

I slipped off the horse's back, and held him. "Props," I said. "Have you anything to shore the stones up? Just to hold them off a man?"

"There's plenty of stuff, all lengths." Mr. Fenwick raised his voice above the sudden roar from a shed of the Land-Rover's motor. "Put your lights on, Bill!"

The lights shot out. Rowan went back in a clattering rear, almost lifting me from the ground. I saw the farmer turn, and cried: "Never mind! I can manage him."

The Land-Rover came out of the shed, and stopped just short of the yard gate. Bill jumped out of the front and ran back to where his father was dragging solid lumps of sawn timber from a wood-stack. I saw the gleam of a metal bar, and the shape of a heavy pick, as they were hurled into the back of the vehicle.

Sandy must have told his mother something as he ran to the telephone, for she appeared now in the lighted doorway of the farm-house. "Miss Winslow? Sandy's on the telephone now."

"It's working?"

"Oh, yes."

"Dear God," I said, meaning it, and put my forehead against Rowan's hot neck.

"My dear," she said, "don't worry. Doctor Wilson will be at Forrest in under twenty minutes, and the men will be there in ten. Would you like me to go too, in case I can help?"

There came to me, the first flush of warmth in an Arctic night, a vague memory that before her marriage to Jem Fenwick she had been a nurse.

I cried: "Oh, Mrs. Fenwick, could you go with them? *Could* you?"

She was as decisive as her husband. "Of course. Don't you fret child." She turned back into the house, and I heard her calling: "Betty! Pour some of that tea into the big flask, quickly! And get the brandy. Sandy, go up and fetch blankets."

Bill had pulled the gate open, and was in the driving seat of the Land-Rover. Mr. Fenwick heaved a great coil of rope into the back. Sandy ran past with a load of blankets. And finally, Mrs. Fenwick, diminutive but bustlingly efficient, with two flasks and a box in her hands, and about her, clad though she was in an old tweed coat, the impression of a comforting rustle of starch. Everyone piled into the car. The farmer turned to me. "Coming? Shove the colt in the barn, he'll come to no harm. We'll make room somehow."

I hesitated, but only for a moment. "No. I'll take the horse back the way I came. Someone ought to go to Whitescar and tell Lisa. Don't bother about me. And—thank you."

His reply was lost in the roar of the motor. The Land-Rover leaped forward.

It wasn't so easy to mount Rowan this time, but I managed it with the aid of the gate itself, and turned him out of the yard, to face the darkness once again. It was now, with the job done, that Nature went back on me. My muscles felt as weak as a child's, and I sat the horse so loosely that, if he had treated me to a single moment's display of temperament, I'd have slid straight down his shoulders under his hoofs.

But, the two of us alone again, he went as softly as a cat across the grass, let me open the cattle gate from his back, and strode on till we came to the river-bank.

Sooner than have to fight or cajole him, I'd have dismounted and led him across. But he took to the water as smoothly as a mallard slipping off her nest, and in a few minutes more, we were striding out at a collected, easy canter for Whitescar.

It was now, when I had no more effort to make, when Rowan was, so to speak, nursing me home to Whitescar, with the sound of his hoofs steady and soft on the turf, that the spectres of imagination crowded up out of the dark. If it had already happened If Adam were dead (I acknowledged it now), there was nothing else, nowhere else, nothing. They are fools indeed who are twice foolish. I had had my folly, eight years back, and again this morning in the early dewfall, and now, tonight, it might be that the chance to be a fool again was gone.

The colt stopped, lowered his head, and blew. I leaned over his neck, and pushed open the last gate. The lights of Whitescar were just below us. A few moments later Rowan clattered into the yard.

As I slid from his back, Lisa came hurrying out. "I thought I heard a horse! Annabel! What's happened?"

I told her everything, as succinctly as I could. I must have been incoherent from sheer fatigue, but at least I made it clear that beds would be needed. "I'll be with you in a minute," I finished wearily, "when I've put the horse in."

Only then did I notice how she looked from me to Rowan, and back again. "Yes," I said gently, "I did manage to ride him, after all. I always did have a way with horses."

I left her standing there. As I led the lathered horse round the end of the Dutch barn, I saw her turn, and hurry back into the house.

The mare's box stood empty. I put the light on, and led Rowan in.

I fastened the bars behind him, slipped the bridle off and hung it up, then tipped a measure of feed down in front of him. He sighed, and began to munch, rolling an eye back at me as I brought the brush and set to work on him. Tired as I was, I dared not leave him steaming, with ripples of sweat like the wave-marks on a beach.

I had my left hand flat against his neck, when, suddenly, I felt the muscles under my hands go tense, and the comfortable munching stopped. He put his head up and his tail switched nervously.

I glanced over my shoulder.

In the doorway, framed by the black night, stood Con. He was alone. He came quietly into the stable, and shut the half-door behind him.

Chapter Twenty

HE STOPPED just inside the door, and I saw him reach back to pull the upper half shut, too. I hardly noticed what he was doing. There was room for only one thought in my mind just then. I straightened up, saying sharply: "What's happened?"

"They got him out." He was struggling with the bolt, but it was rusted, and stuck. He added, over his shoulders: "I see you did get the colt over to Nether Shields. Congratulations."

"Con!" I couldn't believe that even Con could so casually dismiss what must even now be happening up at the old lodge. "*What's happened?* Are they all right? For heaven's *sake*!"

His voice was subdued, even colourless. "I told you. They got Seton out, and the tourniquet saved him; the doctor says it won't be long till he's as right as rain. They'll be bringing him down soon."

I said hoarsely: "Why did you come down like this, ahead of the rest? What are you trying to tell me?"

He looked aside, refusing to meet my eyes. There was a horseshoe on a nail by the door; hung there for luck, perhaps. He fingered it idly for a moment, then lifted it down, turning it over and over, his head bent to examine it as if it were some rare treasure. He said, without looking up: "The beam came down. I'm sorry."

I began to repeat it after him, stupidly, my voice unrecognizable. "The beam" Then sharply: "Adam? Con, you're lying!"

He looked at me quickly, then down again at the metal in his hands. "He wouldn't come out. The beam was shifting, but he wouldn't leave Seton. We did what we could, but with just me and Julie there" He paused, and added: "It happened just before the others got there."

While I had been riding home. It had happened then. *Then*

I said, so violently that the horse started: "Before the others got there *Of course it was!* Because you let it happen! You did it, Connor Winslow, you wanted him dead!"

He said slowly: "Are you crazy? Why should I want that?"

"God knows why! I've stopped wondering how your mind works. I suppose it suited you to let him die, just as it suited you to get Donald out alive! You think nobody exists but yourself, you think you're God . . . every rotten murderer thinks the same! So Donald's alive, and Adam——" I stopped, as abruptly as if he had struck me across the face; then I added, quite flatly, without the faintest vestige of drama or even emotion: "You let him die, and me not there."

It must have been fully twenty seconds later that I noticed the silence. The quality of the silence. Then Rowan shifted his feet and I looked at Con again. He was standing quite still, the horseshoe motionless in his hands. His eyes were wide open now, and very blue. He said softly, and the Irish was there: "Well, well, well . . . so it's true, is it? I thought as much, up there in your grandfather's bedroom, but I couldn't quite believe it . . . not quite; not till the clever little girl took the horse." His knuckles whitened round the horseshoe. "Annabel, me darlin', what a fool you've made of me, haven't you, now?"

The horse threw up his head as Con took a step nearer. "So it was Adam Forrest, was it? What fools we all were, weren't we, and a damned adultery going on under our very noses?" All at once his face wasn't handsome at all, but convulsed, thinned, ugly. "And when you heard the wife was dead, you saw your chance to get me out, by God, and carry on your dirty little affair again into the bargain!"

That got through. "That's not true!" I cried.

"I thought there was someone. You wouldn't look at me, would you, Annabel? Oh no, it had to be Forrest of Forrest Hall, no less, not your cousin, who was only good enough to work for you"

Suddenly, stupid and half-fainting with fatigue and shock, I saw what all this time I had never even guessed: a cold rage of jealousy. Not, I am sure, because Con had ever really wanted me, but simply because I had never wanted him. It had been bad enough that I had pushed him aside, but to prefer another man I saw, too, why Con had told that preposterous lie about the child: out of simple vanity. Everybody in the district had known I would have none of him. After I had gone, his moment came. He had been my secret lover. Grandfather's anger was a small price to pay for his own satisfaction.

He took another step forward. "I suppose you thought he'd marry you?" His voice was cruel. "Was that why you came back? Was it? He's married money before, and you're well worth it now, aren't you? What game have you been playing, Annabel?" He had come right up to the loose-box bar. Rowan was standing quietly now. But his ears moved with each inflexion of our voices, and where I leaned against his shoulder I could feel tiny tremors running up under his skin.

"But Con . . . Con" It was like groping through fog; there had been something I had to tell Con today: something about myself, about the money, that I didn't want it, and never had—that he could have it, and I would take Mother's money, and go

I turned my head into the horse's neck. "Oh God, Con, not now. Later, if you must Go away. Can't you see . . . ?"

"Can't *you* see?" asked Con, and something in his intonation got through to me at last. I lifted my head and looked hazily at him. "Yes," he said. "Do you think I'd trust you now, with what you know about me? I take my chances where they come, and I'm not missing this one. Lisa'll give me all the alibi I'll need, and there'll be nothing to prove.

Even clever little Annabel isn't infallible with a young, wild brute like this The Fenwicks said he was all over the yard with you at Nether Shields, and they won't stop to think he's so flat out he wouldn't hurt a fly." As he spoke, he was opening the loose-box gate and coming in. "Now do you understand?"

Instinct had understood for me, where my failing sense did not. I shrank away from Rowan's shoulder, and came back against the cold iron of the manger. I couldn't have moved if I had tried; and if I had tried, I couldn't have got away. The stable was curiously dark, swimming away into an expanding, airy blackness: it was empty, except for something that moved a little, near my shoulder, and Con, coming slowly towards me with some object held in his hand, and a queer look in his eyes. His hand moved out, in slow motion, it seemed, and took me by the wrist. But all I could hear was my brain, repeating the words which, since that morning, it had repeated over and over again, like a damaged record: "It would be easier to be dead"

I must have said it aloud. I saw the blue eyes flicker, close to mine, then the hand tightened on my wrist. "You little fool," said Con, "he's not dead. I said that to make you give yourself away."

The light caught the horseshoe as he lifted it. The horseshoe: this was why he had picked it up. He had intended this. This was why he came down, alone. He had lied about Adam. He was not yet a murderer. This was the truth.

Then I screamed. I wrenched violently away from him. The movement brought me hard up against the colt's side, and jerked an oath from Con as he dropped my arm and tried to throw himself clear.

But he wasn't quite quick enough. As I went down into the whirling blackness under the colt's belly, I heard the high scream of the horse like a grotesque mimicry of my own, saw the hoofs flash and strike as he reared straight up over me . . . and then the red gloss of blood where, a moment before, Con's blue eyes had stared murder.

They told me later that they heard the scream of the colt above the engine when they were still half-way across High Riggs.

Adam wasn't with them. He, like Con, had not waited. When the horse screamed, he was already at the yard gate, and twelve seconds later he burst into the stable to find Con, thrown clear to the door by that first tremendous slash of the forehoofs, lying in his own blood

with, oddly, a loose horseshoe three yards away; and in the box Rowan standing, sweating, but quiet, with me sprawled anyhow right under his feet, and his nose down, nuzzling at my hair.

HE MUST have let Adam into the box to pick me up.

I remember, as in a darkened dream, swimming back through the mist to see Adam's face not a foot from my own. "Adam"

He had carried me out of the loose-box into an adjacent stall, and he knelt there, in the straw, with my head against his shoulder. "Don't talk now. It's all right. Everything's all right"

"Adam, you're not dead."

"No, dear. Now lie quiet. It's all over. You're quite safe. Donald's all right, did you know? Just lie still: there's nothing we can do."

"Con's dead, isn't he?"

"Yes."

"He—he was going to kill me."

"It seems he nearly succeeded," said Adam grimly. "If it hadn't been for Rowan, I'd have been too late."

"You knew?"

"I guessed. The old radar still working, I suppose. When the Fenwicks turned up, they got that beam shored up, then I came out from under, and Mrs. Fenwick—she's tiny, isn't she?—managed to creep through into the cellar to fix Donald up temporarily. Con was still around, then. Someone had said you were making straight back for Whitescar. Then the doctor arrived, and everyone was concentrated on getting Donald out; and it was some time before I noticed that Con wasn't there any longer. It was only then that I realized that I'd given you away to him. So I came down here."

I shivered, and a muscle in his arm tightened. "I thought, when I heard you scream, that I'd come just too late."

He bent his head, and kissed me. The things he said to me then, in the straw of the dusty stable, with the smells of meal and the sweating horse all round us, and Con's body lying there in its own bright blood under the raw electric light, are not for re-telling, or even for remembering in daylight. But they belonged to that night of terror and discovery, when both of us had had to be driven to the very edge of loss, before we could accept the mercy that had saved us and allowed us to

begin again Then the Land-Rover roared into the yard, and Adam lifted his head and shouted, and the world—in the persons of the doctor, and the Fenwicks—bustled in on our tragic little Eden.

Adam knelt without moving, holding me to him, and, as they exclaimed with horror, told them in a few words what had occurred. Not the attempt at murder, never that: simply that Con (who had come down ahead of the rest to give Lisa and me the good news) had, not realizing the danger, walked into the loose-box, tripped, and startled the colt, which had reared back and accidentally caught him with its forehoofs. And I—explained Adam—had fainted with the shock.

IT WAS late next afternoon when Julie and I walked up through the fields towards the old lodge. We let ourselves out of the gate marked WHITESCAR, and stopped then, looking at the wreckage of the ivy tree.

"Poor Lisa," I said at length.

"What will she do?" Her voice was subdued.

"I asked her to stay, but she's going home, she says. I suppose it's best. What's done is done, and we can only try to forget it."

"Yes." But she hesitated. I had told her, now, the story of my conspiracy with Con and Lisa, and also the truth of what had happened last night. "I still don't really understand, you know."

"Who ever does understand what drives a man to murder? You know what he thought last night, of course? He had an immediate vision of my marrying Adam and settling here. I doubt if he took time to think anything out clearly; he just knew that I was in a position to contest the will if it *was* in his favour, and even to arraign him for trying to get money by false pretences. . . . He couldn't imagine that I'd just stand by."

"I wish——" Julie stopped and gave a little sigh. "I wish Grandfather could have known that you and Adam would be at Whitescar, but then he'd have had to know the rest, too."

We were silent, thinking of the possessive, charming old man who had delighted in domination, and who had left the strings of trouble trailing behind him, out of his grave. I walked across to where the ivy tree lay in its massive wreckage. "The poor old tree." I smiled a little sadly. "Symbolic, do you think? Here lies the past—all the lies and secrecy, and what you would have called 'romance.'"

Then Julie gave a sudden exclamation, and started forward past me.

I said: "What is it?"

She didn't answer. She climbed on to what remained of the parapet of the old wall, and balanced there, groping into the fissure that gaped wide in the split trunk of the ivy tree. Somewhere, lost now among the crumbling wood, was the hole which the foolish lovers of so long ago had used as a letter-box. It was with a queer feeling that I watched Julie, slight and fair, and dressed in a cotton frock that I might have worn at nineteen, reach forward, scrape at the rotten wood-fragments, then draw from them a piece of paper. She stood there staring down at it. It was dirty, and stained, and a little ragged at the edges, but dry.

I said curiously: "What is it?"

"It's a—a letter."

"Julie! It can't be! Nobody else——" My voice trailed away.

She came down from the wall, and held it out to me.

I took it, then stood staring, while the writing on it swam and danced in front of me. It was young, hurried-looking writing, and even through the blurred, barely legible ink, and the dirt and mould on the paper, I could see the urgency that had driven the pen. And I knew what the illegible letters said.

"Adam Forrest, Esq.,
Forrest Hall,
Nr. Bellingham,
Northumberland."

And the blur across the top said: *Private.*

I became conscious that Julie was speaking.

". . . And I met the post-woman at the top of the road. You remember her, old Annie? She gave me the letters for Whitescar and Forrest, and I brought them down for her. . . . Well, I'd seen you and Adam putting notes in the ivy tree, and I suppose, being a kid, I thought it was quite the natural thing to do" Her voice wavered, I realized that I had turned and was staring at her. "So I put that one, for Adam, in the ivy tree. I remember now. I never thought another thing about it. I—I climbed up on the wall and shoved it in as far as it would go."

I said: "And of course, once he knew I'd gone, he'd never have looked in there again."

"Of course not. Annabel—do you suppose it was a particularly important letter?"

I looked down at the letter in my hand, then up at the ivy tree. If it had reached him, all that time ago, what would have happened? His wife heading towards complete breakdown, himself wretched, and an unhappy young girl throwing herself on his mercy and his conscience? Who was to say that it had not been better like this? The ivy tree, that "symbol," as I had called it, of deceit, had held us apart until our time was our own, and clear

Julie was watching me anxiously. "I—I'd better give it to him, and tell him, I suppose."

I smiled at her then. "I'm meeting him this evening. I'll give it to him myself."

"Oh, would you?" said Julie, thankfully. "Tell him I'm *terribly* sorry, and I hope it wasn't anything that *mattered*!"

"Even if it was," I said, "it can hardly matter now."

I MIGHT have been alone in a painted landscape.

The sky was still, and had that lovely deepening blue of early evening. The high, piled clouds seemed to hang without movement. Against their curded bases the fells curved and folded, smooth slopes of pasture, golden-green in the late sunlight.

The blocks of the Roman-cut stone were warm against my back. Below me the lough dreamed and ruffled, unchanged since the day I had first sat here. Two black-faced lambs slept in the sun

Time was. Time is

I sat there, eyes shut, and remembered. Not a lamb called; the curlews were silent, and the bees had gone home from the thyme. It might have been the world before life began, and I might have been the first and only woman in it, sitting there dreaming of Adam

"Annabel!"

Though I had been waiting, I hadn't heard him approach. He had come quietly along the turf to the south of the Wall. The lambs, sleepy-eyed, had not even raised their heads.

I didn't turn. I put up a hand, and when his closed over it, I drew the scarred back of it down against my cheek, and held it there.

Time is to come

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